

# BANDWAGON

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2009

A vintage circus poster for the Campbell Brothers. The poster features five oval portraits of men in suits and bow ties, arranged in two rows. The top row has three portraits labeled ED, FRED, and LEE from left to right. The bottom row has three portraits labeled DOC, AL, and VIRG from left to right. The portraits are set against a background of stylized flowers and streamers. The central text reads "CAMPBELL BROTHERS" in large, bold, yellow letters with a red outline, followed by "GREAT CONSOLIDATED SHOWS" in smaller yellow letters. Below this, it says "BIGGER & BETTER THAN EVER BEFORE" in yellow letters. The entire poster is framed by a decorative border of flowers and streamers.

ED

FRED

LEE

**CAMPBELL BROTHERS**

GREAT  
CONSOLIDATED SHOWS

BIGGER & BETTER  
THAN EVER BEFORE

DOC

AL

VIRG



# BANDWAGON

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### THE FRONT COVER

The window card on our cover was used by the Campbell Bros. Great Consolidated Shows around 1902. It shows the Campbells as young men. It was printed by the Erie Litho Compand and is from the Pfening Archives.

### THE BACK COVER

The window card on the back cover was used by Bailey Bros. Cristiani Circus in 1955. Little is know about the "white elephant." It is also from the Pfening Archives.

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1980-1986-All available.  
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1988-2008-All available.

In addition to above many other issues are available going back to the 1960s. If you are in need of early issues write to the Editor.

Price is \$4.00 each. Add \$3.00 postage for one issue, \$5.00 for more than one issue. Please select substitutes in case we are out of any of above.

**BANDWAGON BACK ISSUES**  
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### SEASON REVIEW

The Circus Year in Review will appear in the March-April *Bandwagon*. Information is needed on Gopher Davenport's Big Top Circus and Circus Latino. Your help is also needed to supply information and illustrations on any small shows that played in your area. Photos should be color 4 x 6 inches

Please send your contributions to the Editor.

### WHAT A TRIFECTA

The 2009 Convention

The Kelly-Miller Circus

and

The Great Circus Parade



# Campbell Bros. Circus

By Bob Cline

*This paper was presented at the 2008 Circus Historical Convention.*

## Preface

My fascination with the Campbell Bros. Circus started a couple years ago while establishing my own elephant records. Having learned that the Campbell show had a tremendous herd of eleven elephants at one time, I found it surprising that there was almost no information about the herd. There were only a couple circuses in 1908 with this many elephants. So, my search intensified with a trip to the Circus World Museum Library. I gathered a world of information on a wide variety of topics, several hundred photocopies of various subjects and away I went. Unfortunately, pertaining to the Campbell elephants, I found only six letters written by the Campbell Bros. to William P. Hall in the Hall files, a couple articles by Orin King and Joseph Bradbury and not much else.

Certainly, a show of thirty rail cars in its heyday had to be documented somehow or somewhere. I found Ed Bardy's *The Story of the Campbell Bros. Circus* and borrowed a copy of a booklet by Levi Bloyd titled *Campbell Bros. Great Consolidated Shows, Bigger and Better Than Ever* from the CWM Library. I already had a subscription to newspaperARCHIVES.com. Then I started getting



Billboard on microfilm on an interlibrary loan. I corresponded with Buckles Woodcock and looked at the *New York Clipper* on several occasions. I made a trip to Lancaster, Missouri, home of William P. Hall, hoping to find the mother lode of Hall papers in the

This poster showing the Campbell brothers as young men was used around 1900. Ringling Museum of Art, Tibbals Digital Collection.

Schuyler County courthouse. I didn't, but I found a Campbell Bros. contract. Then I started reading the Lancaster, Missouri newspapers. Therein I found all kinds of tidbits about William P. Hall and some of those involved the Campbells.

With the advent of the Internet, I now have the luxury of researching the world without ever leaving home. As such, I contacted Eastern Oregon University, the La Junta, Colorado Public Library; the Babcock, Wisconsin

Historical Society; the Fairbury, Nebraska Museum; and the Kansas City, Kansas Historical Society all in one day without ever moving far from the coffee maker. The results of my searches started returning almost immediately. Some took longer. Some gave an answer that sent

Campbell Bros. Circus wagon show in 1897. Pfening Archives.







The Campbell performers and band around 1899. Pfening Archives.

me off again in another direction until the world of the Campbell Bros. Circus started taking shape. The sound advice of fellow historians enabled me to keep searching for answers and move in directions I never thought I would.

This article begins with basically the same information provided in the Bloyd booklet for the first couple years, as I have found nothing to report before 1896 that hasn't already been documented. I'll discuss the very basics of the beginnings of the Campbell Circus. I'll also mention at this time that the Jefferson County Historical Society is offering a booklet about the Campbell history by Estaline Carpenter, basically a re-write of the Bloyd book. Some historical errors were carried forward from the Bloyd booklet to the Carpenter work.

#### The Campbells

The Campbell family was headed by William P. Campbell (1830-1907) and his wife Mary (1834-1926). William was born in Butler County, Ohio near the town of Hamilton. Mary was born in Adams County, Ohio. They began their lives together as husband and wife on March 18, 1854 in Lafayette, Indiana. The Campbells' had nine children, losing three in infancy. Campbell, a businessman who engaged in farming and buying and selling broom-corn, was always looking for a better spot for the family. Josie (1855-1949) the oldest sister and the two oldest brothers, Allen (1858-1937) and Edwin (1860-1950) were born in Lafayette. The rest of the family were born in Augusta, Illinois. This included Virgil (1868-1953) known as Virg, and his twin sister, Virginia (1868-1905) who went by Jennie, and Charlie (1870-1907). Once again the family moved, looking for a more prosperous area. This search took them to Haddam, Kansas. Al was 20 years old, Ed was 18, and young Virg was just 10 years old.

The young Campbell men had been learning the fine art of acrobatics and leaping in Galesburg, Illinois, home to many other circus folks. (For more on Galesburg activity please refer to the excellent article by Steve Gossard in the

*Bandwagon* of September-October 1988.) Practice and rehearsals took place in an old icehouse filled with a thick padding of sawdust. While farming was the sole source of income for the family, the entertainment lifestyle was slowly calling their names. Al and Ed spent a considerable amount of time teaching their younger brothers Virg and Charles, along with their nephew Fred Hatfield (1876-1937) how to do the acrobatics and gymnastics they had been learning at the icehouse. Their parents strongly disapproved of their show business ambitions.

Nonetheless, the boys grabbed every opportunity to present their skills at high schools, civic events, festivals, and fairs.

While living in the Haddam area, the boys met an avid baseball player and fan named Lee Greer (1866-1924) He was a great athlete who liked the boys' enthusiasm and eventually started learning acrobatics from them. Lee was born in Beatrice, Nebraska. It didn't take long for him to join out with the Campbells in their very first endeavor into entertainment business ownership.

#### Their First Circus, 1889

Fortunately for the boys, their determination to go on in show business increased; farming was dying a terrible death with the severe droughts that hit the Kansas area. They began their fabled career in 1889, calling their exhibition the "American Circus." They had managed to buy a 70-foot round tent with a 30-foot center poles. They toured for three weeks, from July 13th until August 9th, when a major wind destroyed their tent. Their outing included a free wire-walking attraction outside the big tent. Once inside, the customers enjoyed the clowns, dogs, tumbling acrobats, the snake charmer of the

This colorful Campbell Bros. letterhead was used in 1899 and 1900. Author's collection.





prairie plains and a fabulous band concert.

The boys even started acquiring animals for their menagerie, including a bear, three deer, snakes, an alligator and other indigenous animals. Their menagerie was a great draw, but was sold off rather quickly as the Campbells did not go out on the road again for another four years.

During the years 1890 to 1893, some of the boys remained at home to work on the farm, while others joined various shows, gaining experience and knowledge in the ways of the circus world. Living only six miles from the Nebraska line, the family started to relocate farther north to Fairbury, Nebraska in 1892. This was a much larger town with a population between 5000 and 6000 people, near a railroad line with farmland available. Once they started settling in town, a couple joined the local volunteer fire department and the local community band.

#### Overland Show Progress, 1894 to 1898

The brothers' rise from poverty was a familiar story in the circus world. The Ringling brothers, the Gollmar brothers, the Campbell brothers, and the Gentry brothers were all in business at the same time, all were dirt poor and trying to make something for themselves, all suffered circus disasters, and all persevered to become highly successful, relying heavily on their families along the way.

While Charlie was off on other shows, he met Richard Tanner of Lincoln, Nebraska, another showman. In the spring of 1894, Charlie, or "Doc" as everyone called him, and Richard Tanner envisioned going back on the road and started making arrangements for performers. Immediately, all the brothers, along with Fred Hatfield and Lee Greer, were signed up and ready to go. The new venture was called the Sioux Indian Medicine Show. Their initial venue was inside the sidewall of the old tent that had been destroyed. They lodged at hotels, and eventually made enough money to buy a wagon and a team of horses

Campbell Bros. bill stand in 1900. Pfening Archives.



## Circus Coming!

WILL EXHIBIT AT

# Ashland July 5

SUCCESS WON BY MERIT  
9TH YEAR

Truthfully Advertised, Honorably Conducted

BIGGER AND BETTER THAN EVER BEFORE

6--FAMOUS--6  
**Campbell Bros.**

Great Consolidated  
**SHOWS**

BIG-Up-to-Date-NEW  
**Circus, Museum, Menagerie**

YOU NEVER SAW ITS EQUAL

ALL LATEST ARENIC SENSATIONS

A COMPLETE WORLD'S MUSEUM

BEST TRAINED ANIMALS ever seen

HEADED BY

# VENUS

Biggest and Greatest Elephant on Earth

A Most Magnificent Menagerie

Including Your Last Chance to See the

BEHEMOTH

OF HOLY WRIT

AS LARGE AS AN ELEPHANT.

When this one's gone Behemoth will be extinct

WORTH COMING MILES TO SEE

—Monster! Majestic! Spectacular!—

**FREE STREET PARADE**

Unapproachable in Wealth and Grandeur!

In the Forenoon—Rain or Shine—See it

TWO COMPLETE SHOWS DAILY

to move the show.

Richard Tanner called himself "Denver Dick." He was an accomplished trombonist, a sharp shooter and soothsayer. He told the boys he could sell anybody anything and started selling medicinal soap at their shows. The product was a regular bar of Kirk's White Russian soap that the boys bought for four cents a bar. They cut it into four pieces, rewrapped it, then pitched it to their audience members as a medicinal soap and sold them as new bars for ten cents each. Even in this endeavor, the boys offered a free act outside. Doc staged a low wire act he declared was so bad that he had to present it as comedy to make it work.

Campbell newspaper ad used in 1902.

The boys called 1894 a huge success. The Campbells started the 1895 season the same as the previous year had ended, but using the show title of Denver Dick's Sioux Indian Medicine Show. Noted circus historian Joseph Bradbury wrote in his 1968 article that he had found evidence in the 1895 *New York Clipper* that the Campbell name was being used as the show title. Charlie Campbell wrote in the *White Tops* (July-August 1953, page 5) that the boys bought the Leftbridge wagon show in 1895.

The correct title was Leftwich or Hurlburt and Leftwich. According to Bob Parkinson's *Directory of American Circuses 1793 to 2000* the show was titled with the Hulbert name (D.P. Hulbert as owner) in several titles and the Leftwich Circus as a separate title while all the titles span the 1890 to 1895 era.

Joseph Bradbury added the 1896 season started out as an overland show with five wagons. Their tent was an 80-foot round with one 40-foot middle section. The brothers used all five wagons in a daily street parade. Their new show was titled the "Campbell Bros. Combined Shows" or the "Campbell Bros. United Shows."

While the name of Campbell and Circus had been together since at least 1869 when Hyatt Frost had out the Campbell's New York and Philadelphia Zoological and Equestrienne Institute: A Model Consolidation of Menagerie, Caravan, and Circus. John "Pogey" O'Brien took out the Campbells' Circus in 1877 and 1878. William Parker Campbell's children would join an elite group of circus owners such as the Ringling brothers, the Gollmar brothers, and the Sells brothers who actually had their



siblings in the circus business.

Being an overland show wasn't everything they wanted it to be. Sometimes they earned the denigrating nickname of "mud show" the hard way. The rain and mud didn't stop the Campbell Bros. show from moving along, but it did contribute to a massive collapse of the seating at Washington, Kansas on Saturday, July 10, 1897. About three hundred and fifty people were seated already. Thankfully, no one was hurt seriously. The show was not held to blame for any wrong doing, as the ground was soggy and soft, precipitating the accident.<sup>1</sup>

Free attractions were a great part of the show's advertising each year. For several seasons, the magnificent rising of a hot air balloon was a sight never before seen by many people. The Campbell Shows utilized the hot air ascension for several years. Unfortunately, just because a hot air balloon goes up doesn't mean anyone knows where it will come down. As a result, a team of horses and a wagon were ready to go heading in the general direction of the balloon's flight until it could locate the downed apparatus. The crew loaded the balloon in the wagon and returned to the show. A Professor Rush was the featured performer for a few years followed by a Fairbury native who called himself "Professor C.A. Wallace, Aeronaut."

In 1898, the Campbell Bros. bought their first elephants. The Joe B. McMahon Circus was selling off some of its animals and equipment. McMahon ran a modest grift show throughout the 1890s. According to Bloyd, the four Campbell Bros., Fred Hatfield, and Lee Greer all put in \$2000 each for the purchase of these two elephants, a pair of trained lions, a zebra, a camel, and a dromedary.

The two elephants purchased were Venus and Topsy. Both were Asiatic females and near full grown as evidenced by photos taken at that time. For some time, a keeper called Nadge had handled these two elephants. Upon the sale to the Campbell show, the McMahon show insisted that Nadge go with them as no one else could handle them. The two references in the Campbell programs after this purchase refer to the elephant handler as Nadge McMayon.

The 1898 season showed considerable growth for the show over the last two years. They were taking their circus on the road in 30 wagons. Their big top had grown to a 110 foot round with two, forty-foot middle sections.<sup>2</sup>

#### Conversion to Rail Operation

As the 1898 season came to a close, the Campbells learned that the John W. Hummel Circus was for sale in Cincinnati, Ohio. An advertisement in the *New York Clipper* on October 15, 1898 (page 567) indicated the Hummel show was also offering for sale a fine elephant, very gentle. Two weeks later another ad in the *Billboard* stated the elephant was broke to work and perform. Did the Campbells buy this elephant? I have found no evidence to say they did. I also have no information about the disposition of this elephant from the Hummel holdings. After a couple trips east to look over the equipment and ponder the huge decision, the Campbells bought the Hummel railroad circus and incorporated it into their operation. They opened the 1899 season as a two-ring show on rails, using nine cars. Also purchased from

Hummel were parade wagons, baggage wagons and animals, including a kangaroo, elk, and sacred cattle.<sup>3</sup>

Shows were steadily moving to rails. While it required a large investment on the part of the show, the performers and workmen now had time to rest at night instead of driving wagons across the country after working all day. Shows were now able to cover more miles each night, reaching cities and states on a consistent basis they never could have before. With one exception, these trains were of all wooden construction with most of them having a steel truss system for support and generally were in the 50-foot long range. By 1897, both Barnum and Bailey, and Ringling moved on 56 cars. The Forepaugh-Sells show was on rails as were Buffalo Bill's Wild West, John Robinson, Great Wallace, Leon Washburn, and Walter L. Main just to name a few.



The Campbell winter quarters in Fairbury, Nebraska in 1904. Pfening Archives.

#### Winter Quarters

During their first few years, the Campbells rented local Fairbury buildings for their winter quarters. The animals were kept in a structure on Third Street, between C and D Streets. The first winter quarters owned by the Campbell Bros. Circus was acquired at the close of the 1898 season when they purchased lots on the south side of Fourth Street, between A and B streets. There they erected at least one barn that doubled as a performing arena. Jumping ahead just a little bit, an auction sale of hogs was announced to be held at the Campbell Bros. winter quarters barn on October 29, 1904. While a clear picture of this particular site has never been fully understood, there was at least a barn with a clearing large enough for a training ring and stables. Following 1906, after the Walker Bros. Horse and Mule Traders moved into it, the barn was expanded to hold 200 head of stock.

A work shop was constructed at the site that served them over the years, even though they moved their winter quarters in Fairbury two more times. Their new site was found about three miles away from the St. Joe and Grand Island Railroad, requiring a spur track to be laid to their quarters. Fairbury was also the Division Headquarters and Division Terminal of the Rock Island Rail Lines. Ed Bardy's book points out that the Campbells used Venus and Topsy, the two big elephants, as locomotives to move the cars around and thereby avoided all the railroad charges for switching.

A wonderful letter in the Jefferson County Historical





This attractive poster was printed by the Erie Litho Company. Ringling Museum of Art, Tibbals Digital Collection.

Society provides an overview of the acquisition of the winter quarters property. Property along "A" street is Block 22.

Kittie C. Campbell from John L. Armstrong and wife, Oct. 1, 1900, lot 7. Virg Campbell from Lucy M. Aldrich on Dec. 12, 1900, lot 12. Fred Hatfield from Kittie C. Campbell & husband April 25, 1901 lot 7, Q-C-D. Kittie C. Campbell from Fred Hatfield Feb. 20, 1904, lot 7. William L. Lea from Kittie C. Campbell on September 28, 1915, lots 7 & 8.

M. Josie Hatfield by Certificate of Award, March 3, 1936, lot 12. M. Josie Hatfield by old age Assistance Certificate on Sept. 8, 1947, lot 12. First Federal Savings & Loan Corp. of Davenport, Iowa from Home Owners Loan Corp.

The *New York Clipper* carried a short article on April 1, 1899 listing many of the show personnel. Dave McLain was working the performing elephants. John Campbell (no relation) would be in charge of advertising with fifteen men working for him. Al, Ed, and Charles Campbell, Fred Hatfield, and Lee Greer were staying on the show. A fine 22-piece band was under the direction of Jim Shaff. Lee Greer was the Equestrian Director. Performers already booked on the show included Fred Welcome, Pearl Forepaugh, Otto Emmett, Ben Triplet, Linda Jeal, William Julian, Blanche Juliann, Albert Koplin, Evert Clandell, Fred Hatfield, Doc Abby, Harry Bennet, and Dallie Julian somersaulting equestrienne. Robert Higgins was in charge of the Side Show with featured performers Lenoir and Rionelli, Leopard family of four, Princess

Flo the snake charmer, Fred Hughes the Strong man, Mr. and Mrs. Fitzgerald, midgets, Neola the long haired girl and Nadge the Fat man. William Crockett would be in charge of the privileges with five assistants.<sup>4</sup> (Linda Jeal's career is covered by John Daniel Draper in the May-June 1987 *Bandwagon*. in an article by John Draper.)

The show went on rails as a two-ring operation. Al Campbell was the Equestrian Director and Ralph W. Graham was in charge of the big show band. The show traveled through the Midwest from the Canadian to the Mexican borders, the season totaling 10,643 miles. Colonel Sturtevant record of shows on the road listed 79 titles in 1898 and 92 show titles in 1899. Fifty-one new show titles were on the road in 1899.

The newspaper ads in 1900 titled the show the "Campbell Bros. Consolidated Railroad Shows, Triple Circus, Rare Menagerie, Strange Museum and Hippodrome."<sup>5</sup> The circus played the Salt Palace in Salt Lake City for a three-day stand inside the bicycle arena on June 4th, 5th, and 6th, 1900.<sup>6</sup> This was the first date the Campbells played indoors.

A 1900 Campbell program using local advertising. Pfening Archives.

**DAILY OFFICIAL PROGRAMME.**

**CAMPBELL BROS. GREAT CONSOLIDATED RAIL ROAD SHOWS.**

**Five-Continent Menagerie**  
**Real Roman Hippodrome**  
**Aquarium and Museum**

FREE DISTRIBUTION DAILY. FAIRBURY, NEB., APRIL 25, 1900. U. D. COCHRAN, PUBLISHER.

**First National BANK**  
Fairbury, Nebraska.  
GENERAL BANKING BUSINESS TRANSACTED.  
Capital, \$50,000.00.  
E. W. Thomas & Co., Dealers in  
**CARPETS**  
\* AND \*  
**Furniture.**  
**UNDERTAKING.**

**Official Programme.**  
Two performances daily, commencing at 7 and 8 p.m. Doors open one hour earlier for inspection of Menagerie. Program subject to change.  
AL. CAMPBELL, Equestrian Director.  
PROF. RALPH W. GRAHAM, Musical Director.

**Musical Programme.**  
Overture....."L'Amazone,".....Laurende  
Selection....."Taushauser,".....Wagner  
March, Descriptive....."Battle of Shiloh,".....Barnhauser  
Waltz....."Sounds of the Alps,".....Zikoff  
Overture....."Golden Nuggets,".....Barnhauser  
Masurka....."La Zarine,".....Ganne

**DISPLAY NO. 1**  
**GRAND SPECTACULAR ENTRY:** Introducing Mounted Knights, Ladies, Gladiators, Charioteers, Mailed Warriors, Helmeted Musicians, Elephants, Camels, Wild and Ferocious Beasts from the Fields, Forests and Jungles of Five Continents.  
**THE CLIMAX OF DAZZLING AND MAGNIFICENT SPLENDOR.**

**DISPLAY NO. 2**  
**GRAND ENTRY:** By a Company of Ladies and Gentlemen Mounted on Horseback. Pretty poses. Pleasing pictures. Finale—ON TO THE COLISEUM!

**DISPLAY NO. 3**  
**CLOWN SONG**.....DUDLEY COCHRAN  
**GRAND HIGH AND LOFTY LEAPING RALLY AND TOURNAMENT**  
By the principal Athletes and Acrobats of the Universe! Introducing single, double, and twisting Somersaults over Pyramids of Elephants, Camels, Horses, Etc., led by Hatfield, Greer, Rydon, and the Champion of Champions, Wm. Julian.

**DISPLAY NO. 5**  
Ring No. 1.....Hine No. 2  
EDWARD GROH.....WM. GROH  
Thrilling and indescribable display of bending, posing and contortion.

**DISPLAY NO. 6**  
Ring No. 1.....Ring No. 2  
ROZELL AND RAYNIER.....CORTEZ AND CASTELLO  
The Modern Mid-Air Monarchs of Double Trapeze.  
Program Continued on Next Page

**Go to**

**A. I. TIMMERMAN,**  
**Largest Name and Longest Measure in Town.**  
**Central Bakery.**  
**\* BLUE FRONT \***  
**Restaurant.**  
A Good Square Meal For 20 cents. Meals at all Hours.



Venus had a reputation as a killer elephant. Everyone was warned not get near her. Unfortunately, on July 13, 1900, in Genoa, Nebraska she killed another animal handler named Bill Young. The people on the show had seen this coming for a while, but Bill tried to use Venus to push wagons without Nadge being there. She immediately took a quick shot with her trunk, knocked him down, and crushed him before anyone could get there to help. The show paid for his burial and erected a burial marker for him. The roster for 1900 indicates that Venus performed in Ring 1, but Topsy was not in the ring.<sup>7</sup>

In 1901, the Campbell Bros. Circus increased their drawing power with the addition of a bandwagon and an old calliope originally on the Forepaugh Show. The instrument came from an inland rivers steamboat. *Billboard* stated they purchased the steam piano from Leon Washburn in December of 1900. Fred Dahlinger's excellent research on musical instruments indicates the sale was actually made to retired acrobat Fred Castle, a show member since 1897. Mr. Castle then placed an ad in the *New York Clipper* offering to lease it to other shows.<sup>8</sup> The bandwagon was a former Forepaugh tableau, one that originally bore a painted likeness of old Adam on the sides. It was heavily rebuilt while in Campbell service. The addition replaced an ancient Fielding Bros. band chariot that had originated with the John O'Brien circus decades earlier. The show also had a second, open top, chariot-style bandwagon that was eventually remodeled into a box-body wagon. It featured a large carving of a zoological curiosity on each side.

The *Fairbury Times* of March 23, 1901 stated that Fred Hatfield and Lee Greer had just returned from a month long trip to the east, searching for and acquiring new animals for the show. They stopped by the Peru, Indiana winter quarters of Ben Wallace and the Ringling Bros. winter quarters in Baraboo, Wisconsin.

The 1901 season saw the show billed as the "Campbell Bros. Great Consolidated Shows." The *Anaconda Standard* of Butte, Montana on June 1, 1901 documented the show was a two ring and one stage affair. It wasn't the best and it wasn't very big, but it was pleasing, and growing.

The show was fortunate to have the gifted calliope player Bud Horn with it until he fell ill near the end of the season and D.V. Manrose jumped in to take up the slack. David "Joker" Manrose was a man of many talents and a real asset to the show over the years.

The 1901 season ended in Lafayette, Louisiana on November 28. It was a long tour of 18,450 miles on rails, covering 14 states over seven months without a mishap, accident, or wreck all year long. The canvas had lasted all season making room for all new canvas the next year from horse tops to big top.<sup>9</sup>

#### Season of 1902

The growth of the Campbell show continued in 1902, marked by purchases of equipment from industry leader Ringling and the acquisition of one of the big three of the three menagerie animals, a hippo.

A letter in the Pfening Archives dated January 11, 1902

reveals the Campbells had received the cars, wagons, etc. in good shape from the Ringlings. It confirmed more rail-cars were coming their way. Their acquisitions included a former Ringling advertising car and another that was likely the first Ringling private car, the Caledonia of 1892. The Ringling advance car served through 1912, replacing an ancient monitor roof car that had arrived with the Hummel train. The show traveled on 20 cars in 1902.<sup>10</sup> An interesting side note is found in the 1905 route book where it states the Campbells had sold the Caledonia the winter before and then bought it back on July 29, 1905. The Caledonia served as the family car through the close of 1912.

The year of 1902 started out on a great note for the entire Campbell family. Lee Greer, a long time friend of the family and a founding member of the Campbell Bros. show, married Jennie Campbell on March 20, 1902, at the home of her parents, Mr. and Mrs. William P. Campbell in Fairbury, Nebraska. Jennie was Virg Campbell's twin sister. The wedding was followed by a lavish reception where many guests were welcomed.<sup>11</sup>



The Campbell steam calliope in 1901. Pfening Archives.

The *New York Clipper* on April 19, 1902 reported the Campbell Bros. had received a collection of animals from the Hagenback agent in New York. This included the hippopotamus Peach. In corresponding with renowned animal historian Richard Reynolds III, he elaborated on the hype of this article. He related that indeed it was true, the Campbell Bros. did have a hippopotamus, but not from Hagenback. Remember, they had visited the Ringling quarters last year in search of animals. Original letters found in the Pfening Archives between the Ringlings and the Campbells indicate that they leased Pete, a male hippo, for one year.

Pete had been on the Burr Robbins show prior to coming to the Ringlings. In 1898, when the Ringlings toured a second show entitled the John Robinson Circus, they wanted a hippo on both their own show and John Robinson. A second hippo was then bought from the Central Park Zoo in New York. This hippo was a female named Fatima, which died in the Bridgeport, Connecticut winter quarters in 1926.

The John Robinson show only made the 1898 season under Ringling guidance and thereby left an extra hippo in Baraboo. Ringling kept the female with them and leased out the male. The Campbell show only carried him



in 1902 as the Ringlings had made arrangements to lease him to their cousins the Gollmar brothers, for 1903. Sadly, Pete died during the winter in Baraboo, forcing the Gollmars to hurriedly buy one as they had already had their posters printed with the featured hippo for the upcoming season.

The initial inquiry into the possibility of carrying a hippopotamus is found in a letter in the Pfening Archives dated January 11, 1902 whereby the Campbells requested terms and particulars on the "Hipp" from the Ringlings. They also turned down an offer for camels, but did indicate if they could get the hippo, then they would take the camels, too.

The negotiations for Pete were evidenced in a letter dated January 18, 1902, when the Campbells turned down an offer to lease the hippo, stating it was too much. Should the Ringlings decide to lower their offer, the Campbells would very much like to have him.

A letter dated January 27, 1902, in the Pfening Archives, indicates that the Ringlings leased, loaned, or sold a hippo cage and flatcar #32 to haul it. The two conveyances would provide proper transport for the heavy and valuable beast. The Campbells asked that the cage be painted red and gold and car #32 to be painted yellow and lettered for Campbell Bros. The final letter in the exchange, dated February 11, 1902, confirmed the Campbells had signed the contract and returned it to the Ringlings.

The *White Tops*, July-August 1953 issue carried a remembrance of the Campbell show by Charlie Campbell. This Campbell doesn't appear in the family genealogy so I feel certain there is no relationship here. He stated the 1902 season saw additional growth in the show's menagerie with the purchase of more elephants, camels, and horses. etc. The comments about elephants should not be plural; only one elephant was added. This was a very young punk named Hamburg. He was commonly referred to as Baby Hamburg, having come from Hamburg, Germany.<sup>12</sup>

The 1902 Campbell Bros. circus was bigger and better than ever before. The show had all new canvas. The big top was a 150-foot round with three fifty-foot middles. The menagerie top was an 80-foot round with three forty-foot middles. The side show top was a 70-foot round with two thirty-foot middles.<sup>13</sup> The Hawarden, Iowa newspaper carried a show ad on May 15, 1902 expressly stating the performance was given in two rings and on an elevated stage, confirming the Campbells were in the three-ring circus class.

Joining the show for the 1902 season was a brand new steam calliope. Bud Horn returned for his second season as the calliope maestro. The Sullivan and Eagle wagon builders of Peru, Indiana, built this new device. It was a twin to the famous Great Wallace "dragon" calliope, with slight differences. The carvings were not quite as detailed as the Wallace calliope. The Wallace boiler was taller and only had a 20-whistle instrument, whereas the Campbell boiler was shorter and straight sided with a 32-whistle machine in it. Sadly, the hometown of Fairbury, Nebraska didn't get to experience this new delight as the calliope arrived on the Campbell show several days after the sea-

son opener.<sup>14</sup>

The "Behemoth of Holy Writ, nearly the size of an elephant," headlined the 1902 season advertising. This advertising was also used in 1904. The opening reviews of the show from Ada, Oklahoma on April 3, 1902 state the show arrived on 26 railroad cars.

A quick review of the show after the first four weeks on the road indicated it had had no accidents with everything running smoothly. Three different bands and the new calliope were featured in the parade daily. Professor Richard Bets was directing band #1 with 18 musicians, George Willron was directing Band #2 and Charlie Clark's Band #3 was furnishing the music for the Side Show.<sup>15</sup>

A quick look at the route cards from 1902 show an unusual aspect in that at least seven different styles of lettering were used to title the cards over the season. Most shows would have simply had one stock card and then placed the route by dates on this one card for the entire season.

### Season of 1903

The weather is always an element of torment to a tented show. While in the early part of May of 1903, the show was fortunate enough to be fully loaded on the train when a blizzard hit with such force that even the heavy railroad locomotives weren't able to move the show train.

**NEW RICHMOND**  
**Tuesday, MAY 24**

**CAMPBELL BROS. SHOWS** GREAT CONSOLIDATED  
UNQUESTIONABLY  
THE DE PURE FAMILY  
THE ADAM THREE  
THE ADAM THREE

**EUROPE'S GREATEST CONTRIBUTION**  
FOR THE AMUSEMENT OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE.  
**THE GRANDEST ARENIC FEATURE**  
EVER INTRODUCED IN AMERICA.  
**NOW DOUBLED IN SIZE** TWICE AS BIG AS BEFORE THROUGHOUT  
**3 RINGS** **CIRCUS MUSEUM** **1 1/2 MILE**  
**2 STAGES** **AQUARIUM** **HIPPODROME**  
**\$1,000,000 MENAGERIE**  
**REAL ROMAN HIPPODROME**  
**The Foremost Show of the World.**  
YOU CAN NEVER AFFORD TO MISS THE  
**MONSTER MAJESTIC FREE STREET PARADE** UNPRECEDENTED IN  
WORLD AND GRANDCOURT!!!  
IN THE FORENOON WELL WORTH A JOURNEY OF 100 MILES TO INSPECT.  
**TWO SHOWS DAILY AT 1 AND 7 P. M.**  
An Hour given to Wagon and Museum Cattle before the  
Commencement of the Circus and Hippodrome Performances. 1903

They lost two dates, Ord and St. Paul, Nebraska. The grave concern was for all the animals aboard the train nearly freezing to death, although no reports have been found recording any losses from the freeze and blizzard.<sup>16</sup>

Campbell newspaper ad used in 1904. Pfening Archives.

The Woodruff Memorial Library in La Junta, Colorado was able to find an article in the *La Junta Tribune* dated May 13, 1903. It stated the Campbell Bros. circus train was ditched the day before between La Junta and Trinidad,

causing the show to arrive near noon and thereby blowing one performance. The show then left that evening for Dodge City. The late Charlie Campbell recalled a fire in La Junta in the rail yards that damaged a lot of harness and caused the death of some ponies.<sup>17</sup> Heather Maes of the Woodruff Memorial Library in La Junta was kind enough to go through the papers for me. She found no evidence of this fire or that the Campbell show was in La Junta in 1902. She found the Campbells were in La Junta several times, confirmed by ads in 1900, 1901, and 1903.



While the show was playing Morris, Minnesota during the 1903 season, a member of the show, Bert Atkinson, while in a drunken state, attempted to climb on a moving wagon during the parade. He fell off and was killed immediately. The show paid for his burial in Morris. The show later ordered a monument marker and placed the marker at a ceremony when the show again returned to Morris, Minnesota on June 23, 1904.<sup>18</sup>

The sometimes-circuitous procedure of dealing with local regulations was revealed in Anaconda, Montana, when the Campbell Bros. agent went to purchase a license for a small show and not a big show. The judge agreed they were a small show and should only pay a \$100.00 fee instead of the normal \$125.00 fee. He then found himself in trouble with the townsfolk as the correct policy said that every show paid the same fee no matter what size. The Campbell show agent was arrested and it took some time before it was all straightened out.<sup>19</sup>

Virg Campbell had decided the time was right to engage in married life. He took the hand of Maude Elizabeth Baker on November 25, 1903. Miss Baker was from Beatrice, Nebraska.

One gentleman, David "Joker" Manrose, would be heard about for many years in association with the Campbell Bros. Circus. Known as a clown to some, an artist to others, and a very good friend to many, he became an institution on the Campbell show. He was a clown in the parade with a donkey cart, and an artist to the show, painting the wagons and railcars over the years. Later in life he painted paintings including the circus. One such painting hung in the Hob Nob Bar in Lincoln, Nebraska. The ticket taker had a striking likeness to Virg Campbell who was the official ticket taker. Virg Campbell's daughter Gertrude Wehling commented in a July 22, 1967 interview that her father would have been horrified to know his likeness was being seen in a bar.

#### Season of 1904

The beginning of the 1904 season sure seemed like the end for some. The opening date in Fairbury went off smoothly, followed immediately by a disastrous fire on the train the next day in Pawnee City, Nebraska. The show arrived early in the evening of May 1st, awaiting the performances scheduled for the next day. The animals were kept on the train to guard against the evening chill. About 11 PM that evening, Nadge and seven other members of the animal department went to check on all the animals on the train. As Nadge entered the elephant car, his gas lantern broke, leaking and spreading fuel. In trying to remove it, his actions set the straw on fire. All seven people plus Nadge got out without being hurt, but the animals lost their lives. The train crew was able to break the cars apart and get the burning car away from

the rest of the train. Three elephants the show owned died, along with four camels, three water buffalo, two grizzly bears, a cage full of monkeys and numerous horses.<sup>20</sup>

A frantic call was placed to the Hagenbeck representative in New York for more animals, to be supplied as quickly as possible. While offers of help came in from other circus owners, the Hagenbeck dealer hurriedly delivered four elephants and numerous other creatures to replace the lost menagerie. They arrived in Omaha, Nebraska just eight days later.<sup>21</sup> A couple snippets in *Billboard* stated while en route they rebuilt the two burned stock cars on May 1-2. The Hagenbeck delivery was blessed with the birth of a camel while en route to Omaha. The baby weighed 37 pounds. He joined twelve other camels and other animals on their way to joining the Campbell Bros. Circus.

The Campbell advance advertising car around 1905. Pfening Archives.



The season continued on a bad start when the largest canvas wagon and one flatcar were destroyed in a wreck near Schuyler,

Nebraska on May 10th, 1904.<sup>22</sup> By May 21, 1904, *Billboard* printed that James Tracy, a pony hostler in 1903, had been attacked, knocked down, and stepped on by the big elephant Venus, causing excruciating intestinal trauma. He brought suit against the Campbell Bros. Circus for \$20,000, claiming that after two major operations he was going to be practically helpless the rest of his life. The petition cited the person in charge of the elephants as neglecting their duties at the time of his injury.

The June 4, 1904 *Billboard* reported Harry W. Semon, the purchasing agent, left the show under good terms due to the fire, rain, mud, and wind, challenges that were daily occurrences since the show went on the road. He apparently returned to the show at some point as purchasing agent. He arrived in Independence, Iowa on July 2nd in advance of the July 8th arrival of the show. While staying at the Union House, blood poisoning resulting from a carbuncle took his life. His death was reported in the July 20, 1904 Oelwein (Iowa) *Register*.

Heading the advertising in 1904 were W. K. Sands on Advance Car #1 and C.A. Clarke heading up the #2 car. Charles Pailing was the chief billposter with E.D. Profitt the chief lithographer, W. H. Covert the programmer, Charles Profitt and Elmer Fawsett as banner men with help from Toby Beers, Lewis Smith and Will Lee.<sup>23</sup>

Newspaper advertising the show in 1904 included a terrific caged act display guaranteeing, "The Greatest Arenic Display the World has Ever Seen." The grand parade was scheduled at 10 AM regularly, with doors open at 1 and 7 pm with the performance starting exactly one hour later.<sup>24</sup>

1904 also saw a milestone for the Campbell family that had nothing to do with circus life. The brothers' parents, Mr. and Mrs. William P. Campbell, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary in 1904. William Campbell, originally of Hamilton, Ohio, had married Mary A. Connell on March 18, 1854.



At some point during 1904, the Campbell family decided to sell their private car, the Caledonia. Apparently they thought wiser a year later and repurchased it, returning it to the circus train as their living quarters.

A three page handwritten letter by Jennie Campbell Greer to her uncle, William Parker Campbell, in December of 1904 mentioned the Campbells were training the baby elephants. Nadge was no longer there. This is the last mention of Nadge, the elephant keeper, ever found in the Campbell chronicle. The Circus World Museum Library has no mention of Nadge after 1904.

#### Season of 1905

The 1905 season represented the Campbell Bros. Circus starting their eleventh season on the road. The *Fairbury Gazette* reported on April 14, 1905, in the "Town & Country" section that the new tent for the Campbells had arrived. It featured a very nice design on the inside, unlike the ordinary tent and was the only one of its kind. Doc Campbell and Lee Greer secured additional horses for the season through the Walker Bros. Horse and Mule Traders in Fairbury. Two baby lions had been born in January.

William Parker Campbell was a very well known showman's name in more ways than one. This very name causes confusion of sorts for all involved in trying to document not only the circus, but the family lineage as well. William Parker Campbell was of course the father to some of the owners of the Campbell Bros. Shows. The Campbell Bros. Circus employed another William Parker Campbell. He is later referred to as "High Grass" Campbell. He was also a nephew to William Parker Campbell, who was the Deputy Recorder of Deeds of what is now known to us as the State of Oklahoma. He also started the Oklahoma Historical Society, but never was involved with the Campbell Bros. Circus. "High Grass" bought a huge printing press with three different styles and sizes of type. In a handwritten letter to his uncle, he tells of printing a newsletter for the show folks each week and that for a dime they could receive the latest news concerning the Campbell organization. This newsletter was called the *Trouper* and a copy from 1905 has been found in the Oklahoma Historical Society. The newsletter gave insight into where winter quarter activity was happening throughout Fairbury. The Erie Litho Co. artists had been busy all winter, as well as the wardrobe company in Cincinnati, Ohio. Just for clarification purposes, William "Low Grass" Parker Campbell was not related to the Nebraska or Oklahoma Campbells. "Low Grass" was from Rock County, Wisconsin and later married George "Popcorn" Hall's daughter, Mabel Hall, an accomplished elephant presen-

ter.

In preparing for the season opener, a newspaper ad listed three rings and two stages, a major expansion of their former three-ring format. The April 21, 1905 issue of the *Fairbury Gazette* stated that Al Campbell had gone to New York to secure more animals for the menagerie. By the April 28th issue, they were reporting two shipments of animals had arrived in Fairbury. The #2 advance car pulled out of Fairbury on Tuesday the 18th with the season opener in Fairbury on the 29th.

The 1905 program is listed in the Ed Bardy book. The show opened with the entrée and tournament followed by a clown song. Two wire acts followed as the third turn with Tora on one wire and Oukura on the other. The fourth display offered champion double somersault leapers headed up by Lee Bishop, C. Mason, and C. DeEspa. The LaVans were up next with an aerial bar routine. The Japanese Troupe of Coe and Cimo and Oukura and Ena were next. The eighth display was revolving ladder routines by the Bishop brothers and the Landre Twins. The Flying LaVans were then billed as the Human Meteors. Back on the ground the lady equestriennes Nellie Ryland and Linda Jeal performed.

The Hines-Kimball troupe offered graceful posing on the backs of running horses. The DeEspa premier acrobats were the 12th display of the show followed by the Cossack Rough Riders. Another wire act by the Adairs was followed by hurdle jumping with Linda Jeal and then the jockey act of Lowande and Davenport. Closing the show was thoroughbred horses running around the hipodrome track. A 31-piece band under the direction of Bob Lirkey kept the show moving.<sup>25</sup>

Campbell newspaper ad used in 1906. Author's collection.

## Rice Lake, Thursday, June 14 CAMPBELL BROS.

### GREAT CONSOLIDATED SHOWS



### THE GREATEST ARENIC FEATURE THE WORLD HAS EVER SEEN.

Engaged at the Highest Salary ever paid any Attraction

Creating the Greatest Enthusiasm. Producing  
**THE MOST UNPARALLELED SENSATION**  
and attracting more thousands than any other "musical" feature ever has done

EVERY MORNING AT 10 O'CLOCK  
**GORGEOUS, NEW, FREE STREET PARADE**

THE LARGEST, LONGEST, RICHEST, MOST NOVEL PUBLIC HOLIDAY  
PARADE EVER SEEN, containing More Grand New Features, More Horses,  
More Elephants, More Men and Women, More Cages, Dens, Tableaux Cars  
More Bands of Music, More Rare Wild Animals than any other Show possesses

A concert followed the main show offering a Thrilling Band Overture, an African Troupe, dancing by the Julian sisters, a Dutch & Irish Sketch Team, Cake Walkers, a Magician, a 16-lady ballet, and the entire Concert Company song finale.

Every show has its bumps and bruises. The out of the ordinary was what always made the news, even in 1905. On May 1, Omaha, one of the new elephants, died after struggling with indigestion and cold damp weather for over a week.<sup>26</sup> While loading out in Columbus, Nebraska on May 6th, 1905, most of the train crew was very nearly destroyed when the leopard cage ran off the side of the flat and tipped over onto the roof, just missing many of the crew and throwing one man almost 20 feet. At the same time, the side show canvas and equipment wagon was heading for the train when a culvert collapsed under it, turning the wagon over and spilling everything onto the

road.<sup>27</sup>

On May 14th, the Campbell Brothers sister, Jennie, who was a twin to Virgil and married to their partner Lee



Greer, died unexpectedly after an appendix operation in Omaha, Nebraska. Lee remained with the show after the funeral, still an owner and a versatile part of the organization. He surprised everyone when he re-married late in the year to Nettie Ashton, a performer and a niece to Mrs. Julian, who had been on the Campbell show for several years. Greer would be associated with the Campbell Bros. Shows right up to the very end. He is listed in the 1905 route book as one of the general managers.

The show experienced a train wreck near Austin, Minnesota on June 22, 1905 and another near Temple, Texas on November 7, 1905. The train broke loose on a downgrade and slammed together, forcing cages to break apart and scattering animals in all directions. Many beasts were killed and others escaped, with local posses formed to help capture the loose animals.<sup>28</sup> It is interesting to note that the Great Wm. P. Hall Shows closed on August 30th partially due to the yellow fever outbreak in the South, while the Campbell Bros. Show managed to complete the season, closing on December 2nd in Duncan, Oklahoma.

#### Season of 1906

The beginning of the 1906 season started taking shape in January when Lee Greer announced the complete sale of his interests in the Campbell Bros. Show, the farm and all city properties. This asset was equally divided amongst the remaining five owners. The show continued to grow in 1906. As a result of the Greer sale, all advertising changed to the 5 owner images instead of the 6 images used prior to Greer's departure.

The Sells and Downs Circus was auctioned off on January 17th, 1906 at Smith Park in Birmingham, Alabama. Al Campbell and his wife were in attendance looking to enlarge the Campbell Show, but ended up buying nothing.

A letter of inquiry was sent on January 22 to circus animal and equipment dealer William P. Hall. This item is found in the surviving letters of the Hall estate, now located in the Circus World Museum Library. The letter asked of Mr. Hall "Have you any elephants, baggage or tableaux wagons you wish to dispose of? If so, will you kindly send us description and prices on same? An early answer will oblige."

The Campbell show did indeed buy a portion of the defunct Great Wm. P. Hall Shows menagerie. It received four camels, two tigers, a zebra, several cages of birds and monkeys. Additionally, the Campbell show took home several wagons, seats, tents, and poles. Amidst the great excitement of loading this all on trains to go to the Fairbury winter quarters, no one realized one tiger had escaped until Al Campbell stuck his head in the car door and was promptly swiped at. At once, the long, drawn out process of first confining the animal to the car began, followed by the recapture, which was finally accomplished near midnight.<sup>29</sup>

In the Fairbury *Gazette* on March 2, 1906, a simple snippet of news stated the Campbells were slowly moving their livestock and paraphernalia to the farm south of town. This signaled their change in winter quarter facilities from the south side of the 4th Street location out to



The large Campbell Bros. big show band in 1906. Pfening Archives.

the farm located south of the Blue River, where they would remain while in Fairbury. By April 6th, the *Gazette* reported the Walker Bros. Horse and Mule traders had bought the former Campbell quarters to expand their operation as they had outgrown their previous location of C Street and Fourth. As the land records show earlier in this article, the Walker Bros. moved in but didn't buy the property.

The following property transactions were supplied by the Jefferson County Historical Society concerning the "new" winter quarters property located south of town by the Blue River. These facilities were only used through the winter of 1909-1910. Campbell Land S, NE 1/426-2-2. as of July 11, 1967. Virg Campbell from Marshall W. Weeks & wife, June 30, 1906. Fred Hatfield from Virg Campbell and wife, June 30, 1906. Virg Campbell from Fred Hatfield & wife, Jan.9, 1911. The Fairbury Investment Co. from Virg Campbell & wife, Jan.17, 1911. L.A. Nelson from City Investment Co, Aug. 12, 1912. Stanley Kasperek, from Emil Schoenrock & wife, Jan.31, 1946.



Campbell songster published in 1907. Pfening Archives.

The season opener for the Campbell Bros. show was in Fairbury each year.

They moved from their winter quarters to the fairgrounds, which were just one block northwest. In May 1906, the fairgrounds were deeded over to the town of Fairbury and became the





The front cover of the Campbell courier used in 1906. Pfening Archives.

City Park.

The following season openers continued at the City Park location. One of the large elephants received from Hagenbeck after the disastrous 1904 train fire died unex-



Harry Kelley, seated in chair, and his Campbell cookhouse staff in 1907. Levi Bloyd collection.

pectedly on April 27, 1906 in Fairbury, just before opening day.<sup>30</sup> The show hit the road with two elephants remaining for the 1906 season. The show was moving on 2 Advance cars and 25 cars back on the show.<sup>31</sup> *Billboard* provided a list of the 1906 side show performers as: "Mr. and Mrs. Savail, Punch & Judy; The Arnolds, Novelty Musicians; Flossie LaBlanche, Strong Woman; Araminta May & Vida Earle, Sister Act; Mrs. Hardy, Serpentine

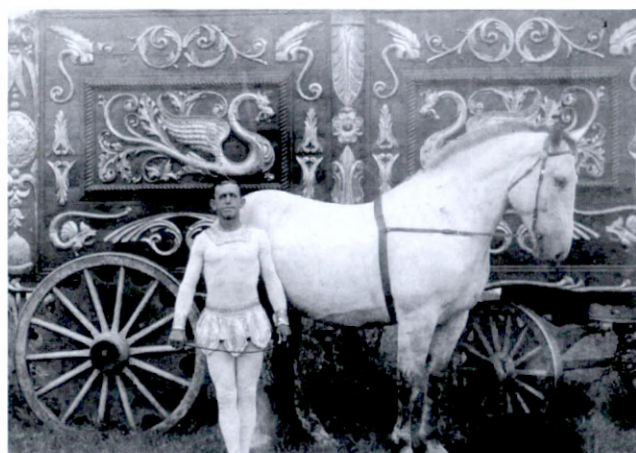
Enchantress; Reginald Poole, Female Impersonator; Mme. Devere, Bearded Lady; and Baxter Reynolds's Minstrels."

The Campbell cookhouse utilized a caste system, as did many other shows back then. All workingmen sat at tables with blue and white tablecloths and the performers and owners dined on red and white-checked tablecloths.<sup>32</sup> Harry Kelly was the Steward in 1906 having been on the show for the three previous seasons. Some of his scrapbooks and remembrances are now at the Circus World Museum Library. His recollections include such great details as the use of meal tickets for show employees, 8 bushels of potatoes a day, steam kettles and open fire cooking, and nearly all the dishes were white enameled steel ware. All the cookhouse staff wore their white Uniforms. He also indicates the show moved as two sections with the first section including the commissary dept. loaded and moving by 11 PM with the second section usually a couple hours behind.

A letter to Schuyler Co. Bank dated October 2, 1906, indicates that the Campbell Bros. Show did some business with Wm. P. Hall for \$2,500.00. The Schuyler County Bank sent a \$1000.00 payment to apply to the \$2,500.00 note. The letter also confirms they would send another \$500.00 the next week. A third letter in the William P. Hall papers dated October 8, 1906 states the payment of the \$500.00 previously mentioned was made and that the balance would be coming along shortly. This would seemingly be for the purchase of animals and equipment from the defunct Great Wm. P. Hall Shows.

The 1906 Campbell Bros. Great Consolidated Shows courier shows the five owners as being four Campbells, Al, Ed, Virg and Doc, and Fred Hatfield. The *Fairbury Gazette* noted on November 9, 1906 that Doc had been away from the show for a few days while he looked at three elephants that Lee Greer owned. Greer reportedly sold the boys three elephants. In a season ending article on November 30, 1906 in the *Fairbury Gazette*, the Campbell show closed with five elephants, having lost one the day before they left for the season. Greer remained with the show, in charge of the elephants. We will learn later that the sale wasn't completed, as Greer still has claim to three elephants in 1912.

Orrin Hollis, rider, on Campbell in 1907. Pfening Archives.





Lee Greer, who had been in the circus business with the Campbell show for many years, couldn't stay away from it all. He took out his own circus in 1906 titled the Lee Greer Circus. It carried three elephants, a large adult and two young punks as evidenced in a cast photo from Bill Green now at the Circus World Museum Library.

While this information about the Lee Greer Circus is taken from the Levi Bloyd booklet, no evidence of the show's existence has been found by this author other than the Bill Green photo and a small notation in the *Fairbury Journal-News* on November 11, 1906. It simply stated: "Campbell Bros. Circus had pulled into winter quarters at Fairbury. Lee Greer, formerly with the Campbells, but with a show of his own at this time, also set up winter quarters here." From the little I can find it appears to have been a small wagon show working the Great Plains into Texas. The Sturtevant circus lists do not record such a title. Robert L. Parkinson's *Directory of American Circuses 1793 to 2000* does mention the name, but no year. The *New York Clipper* offered a listing of show people in the July 4th issue every year in this time period. Lee Greer is not even listed in the personnel listing on shows in the July 6th, 1906 issue. There are no routes listed in *Billboard* or the *New York Clipper*. There is no show listed having a winter quarters location. There are no articles or news clips either. In searching newspaper-ARCHIVES.com's 80 million page database, nothing shows up there. Even the William H. Woodcock elephant files have no record of the show or elephants. However, we will find that Greer is back on the show as a side show ticket taker in 1908. He also will file suit against the Campbell show in 1912 for the unpaid use of his three elephants, which will be covered later in this article.

The 1906 show departed Fairbury on two advance cars and 25 cars back. The circus carried 310 people for the season.<sup>33</sup> This wouldn't be the only Campbell title on the road either. The McDonald and Campbell show was in Texas in July of 1906 according to the July 7, 1906 *Billboard*. Unfortunately, I have never found anything that indicates which Campbell this was.

#### Season of 1907

A letter sent to William P. Hall on January 7, 1907 indicated there were still payments owed to him. "We received notice from Schuyler Co. Bank of a balance due you of \$1104.80. We will thank you very much if you will make out a note of this amount to come due the 15th of next June. Send to us and we will sign and return. Hoping this will meet with your approval we remain as ever," Signed Campbell Bros. by A. G. Campbell.

The Campbells developed a working relationship with Wm. P. Hall over the years. 1907 would find the Campbells in Lancaster, Missouri at the Hall farm buying horses for their show when two elephants arrived. The *Schuyler County Republican* reported that when the two elephants arrived in Lancaster, the Campbell representative was there buying horses and agreed to take the elephants also. The elephants were never unloaded in Lancaster and simply continued on their journey to the Fairbury quarters of the Campbell show.

Backing this entire transaction up about a week or so, *Billboard* ran an ad offering two female Asian elephants

for sale by the Barnum & Bailey Show on March 23, 1907. They were Bughouse Alice and Lulu. William P. Hall sent his right hand man, Bert McClain, to the Bridgeport, Connecticut winter quarters to buy the two elephants as reported in the *Lancaster Excelsior* on Friday March 29th, 1907.

A contract filed in the Schuyler County Courthouse on April 5, 1907, indicated that the previous loan due to Hall by the Campbells was indeed paid off, as there is no mention in the new contract of an additional payment other than this new contract. The new contract was for 20 head of dapple-gray baggage stock and two female elephants. The contract spelled out the usual payment structure at 7% interest and costs of animals if lost by accident or death to replace said animals. This contract was signed by Wm. P. Hall and Ed Campbell. Alice would remain as a herd member up to the final closing in 1912 when she was returned to Wm. P. Hall for unpaid notes to be discussed later. Unfortunately, I never found the name of Lulu anywhere again so I have to assume her name is changed as no other deaths are reported until 1910.



A former Pawnee Bill Wild West tableau on Campbell in 1911. Pfening Archives.

The Campbell Brothers lost their father, William P. Campbell, on March 23, 1907. Not only had he been a father figure to the boys over the years, he was also out in front of the show as an advance man for many seasons. Mr. Campbell had enlisted in the army and served during the Mexican War, being seriously wounded and discharged with honors. He had been ill for some time, being confined to his bed since February and then fell and injured himself quite severely the week before he passed away. He was a member of the Odd Fellows, Masons, Knights of Pythias and the United Workmen.

While still occupying the Fairbury winter quarters, the Grand Island Railroad ran a spur track for the boys directly to their paint shop, where they could work on their cars easier and faster.<sup>34</sup> No indication is given as to where they had worked on the cars before.

The show was saddened deeply with the death of one of the founding brothers, Charlie "Doc" Campbell on May 26, 1907. Doc passed away in Council Bluffs, Iowa while on the show. He had been in poor health for the last couple years but didn't get really bad until about two weeks prior to his passing. His cause of death was listed as



paralysis of the brain. His body was returned to Fairbury for the funeral and burial. Doc was 36 years old and known to do anything on the show at any time. He was the leading organizer of the original medicine show and was constantly looked up to as the leader by his brothers. He left behind his wife, Eunice, a six-year-old son, William and a four-year-old daughter, Margaret.

For the 1907 season, the boys Big Show was offering: the Sie Hassan Ben Ali's Troupe of Bedouin Arabs, ten in number; The Lamy

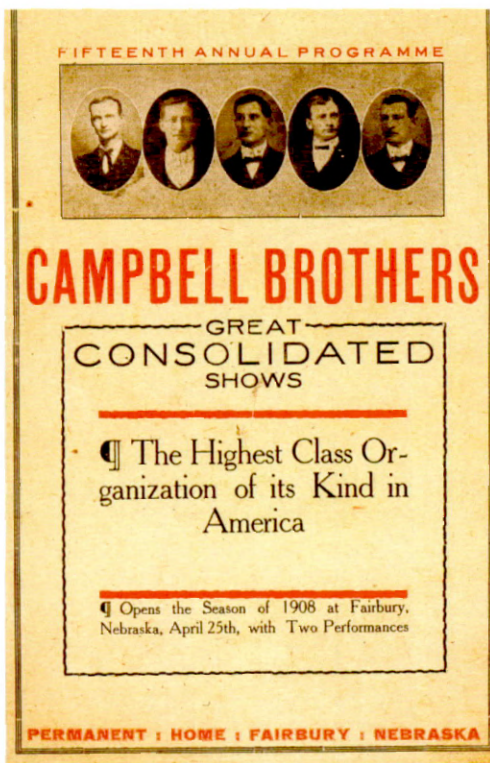
Troupe of 4 acrobats; the three Gentry aerialists; the seven members of the Mizuno's Royal Japanese Troupe; Capt. Dimitri and his Troupe of four Russian Cossack riders; Orrin Hollis, Norma Davenport, Nettie Hollis and Fred Costello as principal riders; Charles Barnett and Win Wallace as mule hurdle riders; many clowns; and a lot of smaller variety acts. A 25-piece concert band under the direction of Paul Gore led the show.

The big menagerie was made up of 22 cages of wild animals, seven elephants, three of which were named Fritz, Lulu, (name probably was changed) and Alice, twelve camels and a fine array of other animals.<sup>35</sup>

A newspaper clipping from Montana, found in the *Anaconda Standard* on July 8, 1907, told of the show's inability to get the parade started on time because a show employee had the sheriff attach the two best horses in the march. It seems that Mr. Gus Erickson was a cook's assistant and found himself removed from the train near the Bozeman tunnel. He was able to get himself back up and caught another train, arriving in town before the Campbell show was ready to parade. He took his tale of woe to the courts and the show was ordered to pay his wages, whereby Constable Walker released the attachment on the horses and the parade got under way.

The front cover of the 1909 Campbell program. Pfening Archives.

On August 8th from Niobrara, Nebraska, the Campbell show again contacted William P. Hall. This letter stated "Enclosed find draft for



\$1,017.50, in payment of one of our notes now due. The 17.50 is the interest due and unpaid on the note we paid July 2nd. Kindly credit same. Hope you will come see us soon. We will be in around Eldon, (Missouri) Aug.20."

As the show continued to grow over the years, it was picked up by the news media probably via the Circus Advertising Department. One article in the *Hamburg (IA) Reporter* on September 6, 1907 stated the show had grown to traveling on 26 sixty foot railroad cars, two advertising cars, with over 500 people on the show with a \$1,500.00 a day operating nut.

The front cover of the 1908 Campbell program. Pfening Archives.

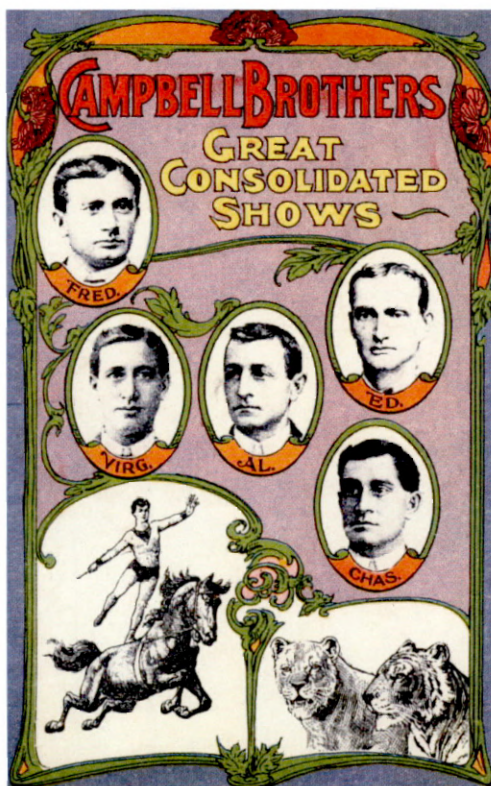
The exact ownership of the Campbell Bros. Great Consolidated Shows comes into question on September 20, 1907 when the *Chillicothe (MO) Constitution* carried a small article on the front page stating: From the *Trenton (NE) Times*: "William P. Hall, the famous horse buyer, has purchased the Campbell Bros. Circus and menagerie, now traveling in Nebraska, and will take possession at the close of the season." The *Lancaster Excelsior* in Wm. P. Hall's hometown of Lancaster, Missouri, also said in their October 4th issue that Mr. Hall had bought the Campbell Show or was at the very least wrapping up negotiations.

While nothing has been discovered of a legal nature that would indicate that Hall had indeed purchased the show, it is completely possible that the Campbells owed

him money and that all this talk was just a way of saying Hall was getting his money one way or the other. If the Panic of 1907 was hurting them is unknown to this writer, but 1908, which was considered to be a Depression year, was actually the best season the Campbells would ever have.

#### Season of 1908

For no particular reason, it has been found that the 1908 season for the Campbell Bros. Circus garnered more press coverage in the trade journals than any other season. *Billboard* covered every angle of the show at one time or another during the tour. There was even a wonderful article written about just the 1908 season in *Bandwagon* by Orin King in the November-December 1981





issue.

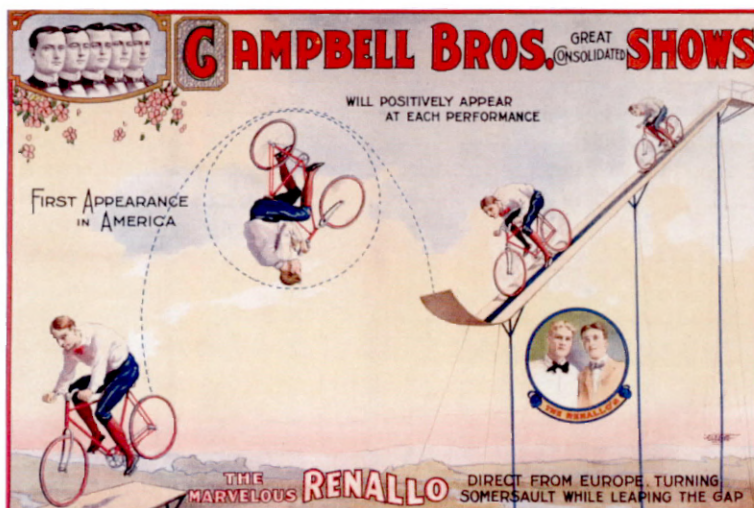
The Campbells again provided a tremendous increase in animals and exhibits. Al Campbell was in Lancaster, Missouri at the Wm. P. Hall farm buying another carload of horses for the coming season.<sup>36</sup> The 1908 season would also add over four weeks in Canada for the first time in the show's history.

This poster featuring Renallo was first used in 1909. Ringling Museum of Art, Tibbals Digital Collection.

Pawnee Bill placed his wild west operation up for sale in late 1907. The December 7, 1907 issue of *Billboard* carried an ad of property for sale by Gordon W. Lillie including: ten 60 foot flat cars; eight 60 foot stock cars; one 55 foot advance car; one 65 foot advance car; two 60 Pullman sleeping cars; one 60 Pullman Private car; 30 Railway Baggage Wagons; four Trained elephants; four Water Buffalo; and eight Siberian Camels. After conferring with legendary elephant historian, Buckles Woodcock, it was learned that the four elephants for sale were bought from William P. Hall after the close of his 1905 circus season. They were known as Mary (long associated with the John Robinson Shows), Lizzie, (from the Walter L. Main circus), Pearl, and Juno.

While exact proof has not been found, circumstances lead me to believe that these four Pawnee Bill elephants were bought at the sale and went out in 1908 with the Campbell show. The *Fairbury Gazette* reported in the April 24, 1908 issue that a carload of animals had just arrived included four large elephants.<sup>37</sup> That brought the total up to eleven in the next morning's parade. The May 2, 1908 *New York Clipper* reported on the sale, giving more proof the Pawnee Bill sale had already occurred. Unfortunately, the Pawnee Bill Museum in Pawnee City, Oklahoma knew nothing about this sale even though they have tons of papers from the Lillie family.

The *Billboard* coverage of one of the Pawnee Bill public sales in the May 1908 issue states there were 151 horses



es and ponies for sale. The Campbell Bros. "took some home with them." This rather vague statement indicates they added more horses and/or ponies to the show. The *New York Clipper* coverage of the Pawnee Bill sale stated the Campbell show bought two Pullman sleepers.<sup>38</sup> The Campbell Bros. also purchased the four trained elephants from Pawnee Bill according to an article by Joseph T. Bradbury in the

*White Tops*, September-October 1968 issue. The four elephants offered were originally offered as a five act for \$7500 in a Pawnee Bill letter to Mr. Hall, now located in the Circus World Museum Library. Tim Buckley was the elephant boss. Sometime between the offer and the actual purchase from Hall in early 1906, the five offered ending up being only four taken. Knowing Buckley's reputation as a very capable elephant man, having been on the John Robinson show a couple years earlier, I feel quite certain that the four act was very well trained and performed a flawless routine.

The purchase by the Campbell Bros. show of the four elephants from Pawnee Bill is disputed by a couple sources. The Bloyd booklet shows a picture of three elephants performing and states they were purchased from Pawnee Bill in 1906, which is definitely the wrong year. The Bradbury article states they were bought from Pawnee Bill. Richard Georgian has researched the Pawnee Bill show quite extensively and has found no mention of elephants on Pawnee Bill in 1908. The Woodcock files indicate that the same four elephants that Wm. P. Hall sold to Pawnee Bill in 1906 remained with Pawnee Bill and into the Buffalo Bill Wild West and Pawnee Bill Great Far East Shows through the summer of 1913. Wm. P. Hall repossessed them before the liquidation auction held in Colorado. The recovery of these four elephants was recorded in *Billboard* and later in an

These two Campbell train views were taken in 1908. Circus World Museum collection.





article about Wm. P. Hall written by Fred Pfening III in the *Bandwagon*, November-December 1966.

Further confusing the status of these elephants is an August 14th, 1909 article in *Billboard* that mentions an elephant named Mary. The Campbell Bros. final replevin in 1912 only listed three elephants: Lizzie, Alice, and Annie. Mary and Lizzie were the names of two of the elephants on the Pawnee Bill show in 1906 and 1907.

The 1908 season staff included: Al. G. Campbell, General Agent; Virg Campbell, General Manager; Ed Campbell, Treasurer; Fred Hatfield, General Superintendent; W. H. Quinnett, purchasing agent; John Mack, Superintendent of Canvas; H. Johnson, Superintendent of Baggage Stock; Wm. Hanson, Superintendent of Animals; N.T. Clark, Superintendent of Elephants; Bert Guantt, Superintendent of Props; George Rice, Superintendent of Train; R. Brawley, Trainmaster; Bill Mayo, Superintendent of Ring Stock; and Harry Mella, Superintendent of Wardrobe. G. Allen was in charge of Advertising Car #1, and W. Vance, in charge of Advertising Car #2.<sup>39</sup> The *New York Clipper* on June 13, 1908 stated that Jack Bloodshaw was in charge of the #1 Advertising Car with 18 men, and A. Profitt was in charge of the #2 car, with ten men. E. C. Fletcher was the 24-hour man and H. C. Brashear was the Railroad Contracting Agent. Another listing of show personnel is in the *New York Clipper* on July 4, 1908 (page 513). This listed everyone connected with the show from canvas crewmembers to ticket takers. It is in this list that Lee Greer is listed as a Side Show ticket taker.



This attractive Campbell letterhead was used around the early 1900s in Pfening Archives.

The *White Tops* carried a nice article by Joseph T. Bradbury in the September-October 1968 issue about the Campbell show. There were some fine photos taken by Jules A. Borquin with the article that clearly showed a large four-pole menagerie and a six-pole big top. This article states that the Campbell Bros. purchased a large parade wagon and the four elephants from the Pawnee Bill show now giving the show a total of eleven elephants. This wagon was the tableau with pipe organ details and bull-fighting or American Indian carvings on the sides. It dated back to the early years of Pawnee Bill's Wild West. While many aspects of this wagon are unclear, we know the wagon showed up on Pawnee Bill in an 1898 photo. The builder is unknown but it was unusual in that like many of the Pawnee Bill Parade wagons, it carried differ-

ent carvings on each side of the wagon. This wagon was not bought from Pawnee Bill until late 1908 at the earliest, as it does not appear in the huge parade photo by Joseph Young.

In order to put the 1908 season into perspective, the Ringling show was carrying 28 elephants; Barnum & Bailey had 20, and the Ben Wallace-owned Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus was carrying 15 elephants, having bought the Carl Hagenbeck outfit the year before. The Adam Forepaugh and Sells Bros. circus was off the road in 1908, so the Gollmar Bros. leased some of these elephants from the Ringlings, giving them 11 elephants on the 1908 tour.

To look at a broader picture of the 1908 season, the two biggest shows on the road, the Ringlings, and Barnum & Bailey's Greatest Show on Earth were both moving on about 80 railcars each. While I cannot find an accurate count for the Sells-Floto Circus in 1908, they did enlarge the show to 30 cars for 1909. The Charles E. Doble remembrance in the February 1952 *Bandwagon* of the Norris and Rowe show had them on around 22 rail cars. The first really complete set of railroad counts comes in 1910 in the J.A. Havirland files found in *Bandwagon* December 1961 Pages 17-19. The Hagenbeck Wallace Circus was moving on 45 cars, John Robinson was on 42 cars, the Gollmars were on 24 cars. While the 1910 count won't be the same as 1908, they aren't much different either.

The Campbell Bros. Great Consolidated Shows went out with 11 elephants, a three ring and two-stage big top and traveled on 28 railcars, opening in Fairbury, Nebraska on Saturday April 12th. The train consist went out with 2 advance cars, 8 stocks cars, 12 flatcars, and 6 coaches including the private car, the Caledonia. This would turn out to be the last time they ever opened in Fairbury. These statistics ranked it as one of the top seven circuses in the United States.

The parade advertised in each and every town to roll at 10 AM daily. The late Joe Fleming of Trenton, Nebraska owned a copy of the famous parade panorama taken by Joseph H. Young of Oberlin, Kansas, in 1908. He observed that the parade march lined up as follows:

Man in a Buggy with a Gray Horse.

Big Bandwagon with 13 Musicians and an eight-horse hitch.

Mounted people in high hats, 2 dark and 6 white horses.

Cage - small, closed with 6 ponies.

Cage - small, open with 2 dark horses.

Cage - small, closed with 2 dark horses.

Cage - small, closed with 2 white horses.

Mounted people, 2 dark and 1 white horse.

Cage - small, closed with 2 dark horses.

Clown on a mule.

Cage - small, closed with 2 white horses.



Cage – small, closed with 2 white horses.  
 Cage – small, closed with 2 white horses.  
 Big bandwagon with 10 musicians and a 6-horse hitch.  
 Mounted People, 4 white and 4 dark horses.  
 Cage – Big, closed, 3 sections with a 4 dark horse hitch.  
 Cage – big, open 3 sections with a 6 white horse hitch  
 w/ 2 people on top.

Clown on Mule and Boss Hostler riding beside on White Horse.

Cage – closed 2 sections with 4 gray horses.

Cage – open 3 section with 4 gray horses w/ man on top.

Cage – closed 2 sections with 4 gray horses.

Cage – open 3 section with 4 gray horses.

Boss Hostler along side with a dark horse.

A man leading a huge white horse.

Big Bandwagon with 7 musicians and an 8 dark horse hitch.

Cossack riders mounted on 2 white and 2 dark horses.

Cage – open 3 section with 6 gray horses w/ 5 Japanese performers on top.

Cage – small, fancy, closed with 2 white horses.

Cage – Big, Closed with 6 Gray horses.

Water Buffalo hitched to a cart w/ 2 Indians riding cart and buffalo

8 camels blanketed – a few with banners

Mounted Boss.

11 elephants

Steam Calliope with a 6 white horse hitch and really fancy harness.<sup>40</sup>

Arriving on the lot the spectators were greeted by the colorful array of side show banners calling them in to the land of the strange, odd, and curious. The side show or annex was under the watchful eye of J.C. O'Brien. Inside, the staff and attractions were: Claude F. Coley as the announcer; Capt. Rickman Mack, the strong man; Mons. Diavolo the steel skinned man; Otto DeVarre the sword swallower; Barney Kruntz, the tattooed man; Prof. and Mrs. Wyndecker, doing the Punch & Judy show and magic; Chief Sapollo and daughter as Indian War dancers; Mme. Faye, the snake charmer; Mme. Ogarita, Eva Metcalf and Reginald Podie as the entertainers; and Prof. Clark's fourteen piece military band.<sup>41</sup>

The show carried Raleigh Wilson as Boss Clown, with the clown alley filled out by W. E. Donahugh, W. E. David, Ed Allen, Ed Boggs, Shorty Roberts, Wm. Wallace, Charles Barnett, Boles and Kelly, Lew Hamilton, the Bishop Bros. and Buck Reger.

Fred Hatfield was the Equestrienne Director. Ted Hill was the calliope player; Judd Marsh was the parade director; Charles Frank headed up the cookhouse with 12 guys under him, and Frank Witsell was the prop boss.<sup>42</sup>

The seasoned veteran Cossack rider, Captain Demetri, was tragically killed in front of 5,000 spectators on September 16th in Muscatine, Iowa. As he was riding his

horse full speed down the hippodrome track, his head slammed into a tent pole causing massive trauma. With his limp body still mounted on the horse, one leg became entangled in a guy wire, which then severed his leg. The entire show was over that evening.<sup>43</sup>

A terrible accident early in the season revealed a very unusual way of life for the traveling show. A gasoline-fired stove blew up, covering 18-year old Harry Wallace in a mass of flames. Circus troupers extinguished the flames and the young man was hurried to St. Vincent's hospital in Sioux City, Iowa.<sup>44</sup> Wallace of Fairbury, Nebraska, lost his life due to the severe burns over most of his body, as reported in the May 16, 1908 Cedar Rapids *Evening Gazette*. Conflicting information is in these reports; the first notice says the cook tent, whereas the death announcement says the stove was in the company

car. The Fairbury *Gazette* called it the concession car. Can we assume this was the privilege car?

A typical Campbell cage with a lion that appeared in parades. Pfening Archives.

A small article that throws a bit of confusion in the works appeared on November 4, 1908 in the Humeston (IA) *New Era*, on the front page. It quoted Wm. P. Hall as saying the Campbell Bros. Circus would

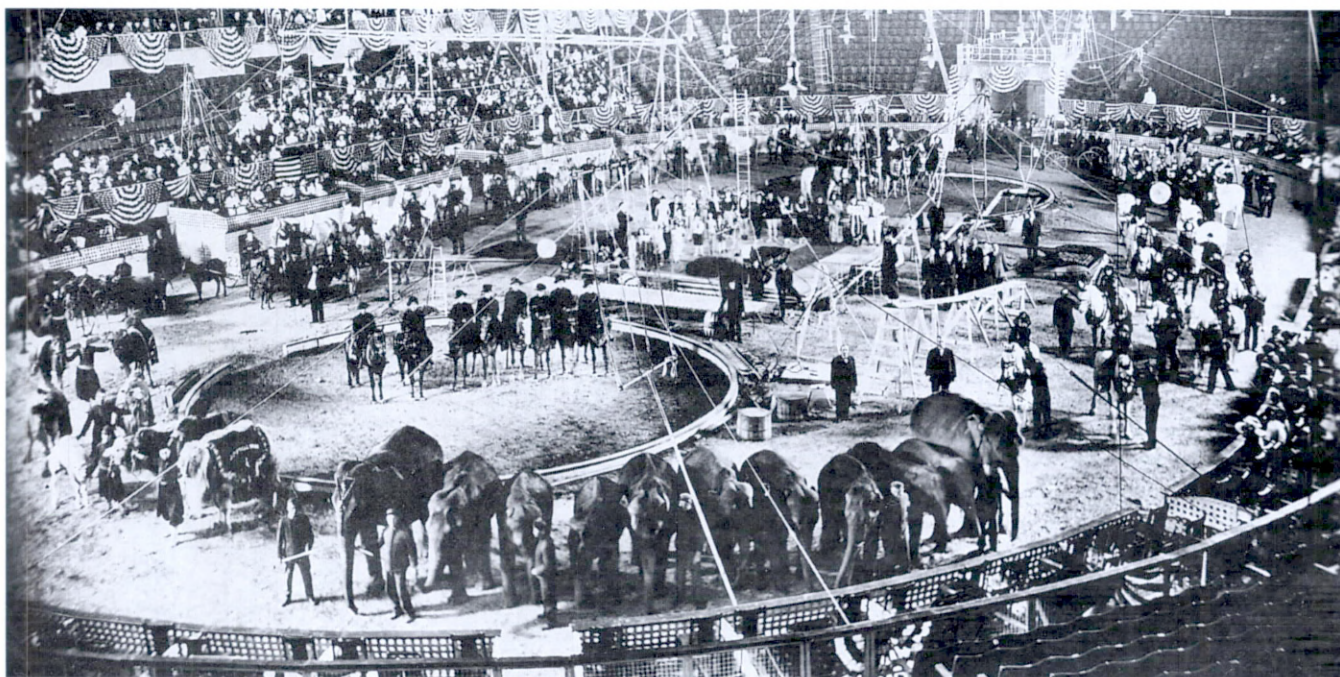
be wintering at his place in Lancaster, Missouri this year. He offered that the show might go out next year with the Wm. P. Hall title and greatly expanded. Hall's brother Lou was leaving for Africa to purchase 15 more elephants for the Campbells and other shows. We do know that the Campbell show came off the road in 1908 with 11 elephants, wintered in Fairbury and went back out in 1909 with 11 elephants, indicating no elephants were added from the Hall stables.

Another piece of information tying the Campbells to Hall was found in the *Schuyler County Republican* on November 13th, 1908. Mr. Hall bought two wild hogs at the Street Fair in Lancaster, Missouri and had them shipped out to the Campbell Bros. Circus. Upon their winter return to Fairbury, the Campbell staff stated that the 1908 season, except for the tragedy to Harry Wallace early in the season, was the best one they ever had in business.

The final action of the season took place on the 15th of December. Al G. Campbell, Virg Campbell, Ed Campbell, and Fred Hatfield entered into a corporation agreement listing the initial amount of capital stock as \$100,000 divided into one-thousand shares of \$100.00 each. The Corporation would be known as Campbell Bros. Consolidated Shows. A Board of five members elected by the Officers would conduct the affairs of the Corporation. There is no mention of which the Officers were that they elected.<sup>45</sup>







The Campbell performers and animals in the Kansas City arena in 1909. Pfening Archives

#### Season of 1909

A letter to Wm. P. Hall dated February 24, 1909, and using the normal Fairbury, Nebraska return address states that "Mr. Smith and Mr. Berry have been looking over and considering the purchase of the defunct Lemon Bros. show equipment, and returning to Kansas City to look it over again. The Lemon train was reportedly in bad shape. They were taking a Missouri Pacific Railroad man with them to look it over." Ed Campbell, who signed the letter, indicated that he offered these gentlemen the Lemon Bros. show for \$30,000 minus the billposting car. He'll keep Wm. P. Hall informed as he hears from them. While this letter really has no bearing on the Campbell show, it does indicate that Ed Campbell was apparently trying to act as a broker for Wm. P. Hall. There is no indication as to who this Mr. Smith and Mr. Berry were.

A small tidbit of Fairbury news in the *Nebraska State Journal* on March 27, 1909 reported that Al G. Campbell had just returned from Hot Springs, Arkansas, where he had been seeking treatment for his inflammatory rheumatism over the last four weeks. Although weakened, he was able to move around with the assistance of a cane. The normal announcement of "Call" for all performers and personnel for the 1909 season was placed in the *Billboard* on March 20, 1909.

The *Lancaster (MO) Excelsior* stated in their February 26th, 1909 issue that Wm. P. Hall had just returned home after being at the Fairbury, Nebraska winter quarters of the Campbell Bros. Shows, "where he is a large shareholder." Unfortunately, nothing appears in the Jefferson County court records to indicate that Hall was a shareholder of any stock. Another article in the *Lancaster Excelsior* on April 8th, 1909, stated that Hall was in Kansas City looking over his interests in the Campbell Bros. shows at their opening stand. These were the only

articles I found that declared Wm. P. Hall was an owner. Since he was not in the original Articles of Corporation, I am inclined to believe that the Campbell show simply owed Mr. Hall a bunch of money and he was making sure that everything was right for him to get his money back.

There was nothing in the Lancaster, Missouri courthouse records to show the Campbells were indebted to Mr. Hall. The surviving Campbell letters to Hall do not indicate a debt until 1910, however it doesn't say a debt was not incurred, as many of Mr. Hall's dealings were not recorded legally.

The Campbells opened their 1909 season unlike ever before, with a special eight day engagement at the Convention Hall in Kansas City, Missouri, sponsored by the Kansas City Zoological Society. A special program was issued for the date.

They created a Black and White Courier just for these Kansas City dates that when folded out carried the now famous three tier photo of the 1908 parade as taken by Joseph Young. The Campbell Show doubled back to Fairbury, showing there on May 21st, after being on the road for a month.

A featured performer for the 1909 season would be the Dare Devil Renallo, who turns complete somersaults in mid-air on a bicycle while leaping the gap. His featured performance was so brilliant that the Erie Litho Co. produced a one sheet flat just for Renallo for the Campbell show that year.

#### Season of 1910

A good listing of the many show workers on the 1910 tour appears in the 1910 census taken in Fairbury. Judy Griffin supplied me with 2 full pages of circus laborers or 98 men. Lee Greer was listed as a laborer with the show, his age given as 38 and his place of birth as Iowa. There is no mention of his wife. The 1910 Route Book would list Lee Greer as the Equestrienne Director.

The show ran a fairly good sized ad in *Billboard* on January 15, 1910, seeking band members, advance, side



show, uptown wagon, privileges, bosses, and workingmen. There was a major managerial change at the beginning of the 1910 season. Virg Campbell decided to stay at home and not travel with the show. The group still considered him a partner and respected his wishes. Remaining were Al G. Campbell as the General Manager, Ed Campbell as the Treasurer, Fred Hatfield as the Secretary, Lee Greer as the Purchasing agent, W. P. "High Grass" Campbell as the license adjuster and in charge of reserved seats, Henry Pullman as the 24-hour man, and Dr. T. S. Crosby as the show physician and surgeon.<sup>46</sup>

A little insight into the elephants of the Campbell Bros. Circus in 1910 was recorded by the *Nevada State Journal*. When asked about his elephants, the head elephant man (unnamed in the article, but presumably Arthur Green) mentioned that all of them were females except the smallest one at the end with the small tusks, which was a male elephant.<sup>47</sup> Two acts of four large and four small elephants were listed in the 1910 program, presented by Arthur Green and Roy Austin. Also featured were two rings of animal antics featuring "Fritz," the comical elephant, assisted by "Guthrie," the trained pony as the waiter. In another ring display was "Annie" the dining elephant and "Babe" the pony waitress. The show featured a 40-lady ballet under the direction of B. Perl. Dan Leon was the Equestrienne Director and H. Wm. Wingert is directing the huge 25-piece Big Show band.<sup>48</sup>

The roster and show's performance for the 1910 season was as follows: Frank Mutton was in charge of Privileges; Art Seegar was in charge of the privilege car; Howard Damon, steward; Blacky Howard, boss canvas man; W.C. Cox, in charge of Chandeliers; Jim Wilson, side show canvas boss; J. R. Otis, snake show; D. C. Hawn, General Superintendent; Harry Parish, Master of Transportation; Jack Foley, Boss Hostler; Bill Hanson, animal superintendent; Pete Strovie, wardrobe boss for men; Mrs. Howard, wardrobe boss for ladies; Dugger Lohts, prop boss; Jack Dillion and M. B. Scott, blacksmiths; and M.E. Wagner, timekeeper. The show train pulled out of Fairbury on April 6th arriving in El Reno, Oklahoma on the 7th. They held dress rehearsals there on the 8th. The season opener occurred in El Reno on April 9th.<sup>49</sup>

The show ran some newspaper publicity stories over the years with complete disregard to factual information. As a result, caution has to be exercised in determining actual historical content. As a former animal trainer, one particular article grabbed my attention. One of the two-year old lions developed an illness, which they thought was possibly a bone stuck in his throat. They pinned him in a crate and wedged a board above and below his head so he couldn't move. They then flipped the crate upside down forced open his mouth and stuck a block of wood between his jaws while they ran a copper wire down his throat. No bone was found. From my experience, this two-year-old lion should have weighed between 200 and 250 pounds already. The crate was righted and the lion was released. Getting worse by the next day, they finally sought veterinary help, which diagnosed the lion with diphtheria. The lion was taken to a steam bath room, where he was wrapped in hot towels and kept warm at all times. His mouth and tongue were so swollen that he

could not swallow his medicine. A syringe gave all medicines and nourishment. The lion made a slow and remarkable recovery and was featured in the menagerie.<sup>50</sup> That sounds like a great heart warming story but that's about all.

The season of 1910 took a terrible toll on the show, with three train wrecks. The first occurred on Monday, June 20th, in Oregon, on the track between Riparia and Grange City Junction. The show was traveling from Walla Walla, Washington to Lewiston, Idaho. The train moved in two sections, with the first being hit head on by a freight train. Both were traveling about forty miles per hour when the collision occurred. The train crew jumped to safety, but the impact took the lives of ten of the show's horses and destroyed four of the circus train cars. Most of the damage occurred to the baggage wagons, tents, and machinery the show was carrying. They were unable to make the scheduled date in Lewiston later that day.<sup>51</sup>

The worst of the three train wrecks, the second, occurred on August 16th, 1910 near Babcock, Wisconsin, when a north-bound passenger train, speeding to make up lost time, slammed into the front end of the Campbell Bros. circus train near a switch. The passenger train locomotive flew onto its side, while all of the cars behind it derailed. The show had six train cars, a number of wagons, and many animals destroyed. An employee, John Randall from McCloud, Minnesota, lost his life instantly. Thomas Johnson died in a Tomah hospital shortly after, as did Arthur Green later in the day.<sup>52</sup> Many folks were hurt. The menagerie was devastated with the loss of two elephants, six camels, four ponies and two trick horses. Unfortunately, the elephants suffered terribly at first. The attendants tried to poison them to end their suffering and eventually destroyed them. A fire broke out shortly after the wreck and consumed part of the mangled show.<sup>53</sup>



The Campbell Bros. Circus train wreck in 1910. Pfening Archives.

Two more elephants took off through the woods and remained at liberty for hours. A box of snakes broke open and slithered into the countryside. *Billboard* reported three stock cars were destroyed, with seven or eight cars in a heap. Dr. Crosby, the show's attending physician, was given tremendous credit for his quick actions.<sup>54</sup> The resilience of the show had them performing again the next day in Portage, Wisconsin, having only missed one date in Sparta, Wisconsin.

A first hand eyewitness account of the show was delivered in the Humeston (IA) *New Era* newspaper on Wednesday Sept. 7, 1910. A front-page article lists the



holdings of the Campbell Bros. menagerie just three weeks after this deadly and destructive train wreck. Found inside the tent by the writer were 25 cages of wild animals including: lions; leopards; tigers; Barbary sheep; sacred ox; zebras; ostriches; four sea lions from the Pacific Ocean; caribou; several camels; and nine elephants.



The Campbell big show band in front of the band chariot in 1890s Pfening Archives.

The third train wreck of the season occurred somewhere between the train yards in Goliad, Texas, while en route to Victoria on December 9, 1910. While no newspaper articles were found in the Texas libraries giving any details of this wreck, I found one report that four flatcars were derailed however I failed to document this source. We do know from a Victoria, Texas review that the show was late arriving in their community.

Upon examination of hundreds of circus contracts with railroads, Sverre Braathen found many using language that said something to the effect that "It is mutually understood and agreed that the railway was not a common carrier of circuses or show outfits, or cars, and equipment carrying the same, and has never held itself out as such, and that it enters into this agreement as a Special Carrier only, and not as a common carrier. That it will and does hereby release and discharge the Railway of any and all Liabilities for claims and damages of every name and nature, by reason or on account of any accident, injury, death, whether caused by negligence of the Railway, or its employees or otherwise that may occur to

The Crandel riding act that appeared with the Campbell show. Pfening Archives.



or be suffered or sustained by any or all persons composing or attached to said Circus or show."<sup>55</sup> With general contracts like this, it doesn't take much to see how devastating one wreck would be, let alone to sustain three train wrecks in the same season.

The show was running into troubles out front with bookings as evidenced by two surviving letters. In a letter from the Pfening Archives dated July 7th, Al G. Campbell was contacting the show's agent W. H. Quinnett and instructing him to turn over all contracts and papers to Mr. Syeles and return to the show at once. The Campbells did not want Carmichael and "it will remain up to you whether you stay the rest of the season or not."

A letter to Wm. P. Hall dated July 8th, 1910, sent from Red Lodge, Montana asked Mr. Hall for some names of towns to play in Missouri. The letter also mentioned that they would start sending \$1000.00 payments shortly until the full \$5000.00 was paid to Mr. Hall. The business had been awful due to the amount of wind. Al Campbell signed this letter. The communication confirms that the Campbell circus was indebted to Hall for a substantial amount of money. It also suggests that the show staff had exhausted their own knowledge for possible dates that would prove financially successful.

The Campbell show played in Lancaster, Missouri, Hall's hometown, on August 30th, 1910. Naturally, the entire Hall family attended the show. While in Lancaster, the Campbells purchased another fine show car from Mr. Hall as reported in the Lancaster *Excelsior* on September 2, 1910.

A colorful Campbell route card used in 1911. Pfening Archives.

SEASON 1911				
				
GREAT CONSOLIDATED SHOWS				
OFFICIAL ITINERARY				
DATE	TOWN	STATE	RAILROAD	MILES
Sept. 11	Dalhart	Texas	Ft. Worth & D	111
Sept. 12	Amarillo	Texas	Santa Fe	82
Sept. 13	Plainview	Texas	G. C. & Santa Fe	75
Sept. 14	Lubbock	Texas	G. C. & Santa Fe	47
Sept. 15	Snyder	Texas	G. C. & Santa Fe	87
Sept. 16	Sweetwater	Texas	G. C. & Santa Fe	39
SUNDAY				
Sept. 18	Coleman	Texas	G. C. & Santa Fe	73
Sept. 19	Goldthwaite	Texas	G. C. & Santa Fe	67
Sept. 20	San Saba	Texas	G. C. & Santa Fe	46
Sept. 21	Killeen	Texas	G. C. & Santa Fe	57
Sept. 22	McGregor	Texas	St. L. and So. W.	59
Sept. 23	Hamilton	Texas	S. N. and S. T.	63
SUNDAY				
Sept. 25	Comanche	Texas	Ft. W. & R. G.	69
Sept. 26	Stephenville	Texas	S. N. and S. T.	37
Sept. 27	Gatesville	Texas	St. L. and So. W.	78
Sept. 28	Hubbard	Texas	H. and Tex. Cen.	76
Sept. 29	Hearne	Texas	H. and Tex. Cen.	84
Sept. 30	Athens	Texas	St. L. and So. W.	128
SUNDAY				
Oct. 2	Tyler	Texas	St. L. and So. W.	37
PERMANENT ADDRESS AND WINTER QUARTERS: FAIRBURY, NEB.				



A lengthy article announcing the coming of the Campbell Bros. Show to Lancaster, described the winter quarters in Fairbury, Nebraska in some detail. The *Lancaster Excelsior* reported on August 19, 1910 as follows: "To those that have never had the pleasure of visiting a circus in its winter quarters, a description might be interesting. Campbell bros. winter quarters are situated



The Campbell side show bannerline in 1910. Pfenig Archives.

on a beautiful farm one and a half miles from Fairbury, Nebraska on the Little Blue River. The first building to attract attention is the mammoth horse barn, wherein during the winter months are stabled 250 head of horses, which are used with the show. Next to the barn stands a large building made of concrete blocks known as the cat building which is the winter home of lions, tigers, leopards, cougars, hyenas, monkeys, birds, and so on. Next to this comes a large frame building known as the elephant house, the home of their herd of performing elephants. Then comes the camel barn, the Shetland pony barn and the ring barn. This latter building would be of special interest to anyone as it is where the cake walking horses, the dancing elephants, and Shetland ponies are taught their tricks and where lady and gentlemen riders who appear in their costly wardrobe and pleasing acts and practice during the winter months."

While playing in Texas during November, the show was reviewed in the Brownsville *Daily Ledger* on November 29, 1910 by one of the staff writers. While enjoying the menagerie, the writer noted seeing the three baby tigers, the four sea lions from California, ostriches, lions, tigers and leopards and the eleven elephants that had enjoyed an early morning bath in the Mississippi River. This review makes me wonder if the two elephants lost in the Babcock, Wisconsin wreck had been replaced. Another review from Victoria, Texas, on Dec. 10, 1910 told of the show being conducted on an elevated stage and two rings after arriving late that day. It also mentions the 11 elephants.

The 1910 and 1911 seasons both carried the newspaper ad featuring the Marvelous Renello, who would turn a complete somersault while leaping the gap on a bicycle. The hyperbole that was attached to the same ad listed 42 double length railroad cars, 17 elephants, 500 of the finest horses on earth, twenty clowns, twenty bareback riders, 40 aerialists, including over 700 people all together.

While the season had been a good one, the boys want-

ed to shorten their winter quarters time and elected to continue south a while longer. Sadly, this was a devastating decision as they ran into an epidemic of hoof and mouth disease. This caused the show a heavy loss in their horses and forced them into quarantine in New Orleans where they could not return to Fairbury. The long season closed in New Orleans.

#### Season of 1911

The show placed one of the usual help wanted ads in the *Billboard* of January 14, 1911, looking for performers doing two or more turns, clowns, musicians and other useful people, side show attractions, billposters and agents, 24-hour man, and electricians. Applicants were to contact the Campbell Bros. Shows at 8901 Oak Street, New Orleans, LA. Another ad was placed on April 15, 1911, seeking hand-balancing acts, contortionists, single traps, rings, or fill in clowning. Lew Nichols was the side show boss and needed a strong man who had to be well muscled and look the part.

According to the Chappie Fox and Tom Parkinson book *The Circus Moves By Rail*, the 1911 edition of the Campbell Bros. show was traveling on 28 cars total. They had two cars out in advance, eleven flat cars, seven stock cars and eight coaches. The season opened under canvas in New Orleans on March 23rd making it the earliest opening ever.

A preacher named W. Moore traveled with the show for a period of time in 1911. He described the lifestyle and accommodations in great detail. One detail states the workmen's coaches were attended by Porters who made the beds, cleaned the cars, and did the men's laundry each day. Twenty-five cents was withheld from the men's pay each week for this service.<sup>56</sup>

The Campbell Bros. show kept up the relationship with Hall as evidenced by a news snippet in the *Lancaster Excelsior* on July 7th, 1911 when it was reported that Al G. Campbell had been a guest at the William P. Hall home last Thursday. The Campbell Bros. would owe Mr. Hall a pile of money by January of 1912 when they signed an agreement that will be covered in detail later in this article.

The long 1911 tour closed in San Augustine, Texas on December 6. The show wintered in Beaumont, Texas. A letter to William P. Hall dated Dec. 10, 1911 evidences this. The new winter quarters was an old train shed four hundred feet long with enough room to get all of the show cars inside. "It will take the signor, (Al Campbell) about two weeks to get everything settled in and hay and feed brought in before he can head north to visit Mr. Hall. Contact Al through Campbell Bros. Shows, General Delivery, Beaumont, Texas. Best wishes for a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year." Why stay in Texas when they already had a permanent winter quarters in Fairbury? They surely were paying rent for this property in Texas. It is possible that they were avoiding the banks by then. I doubt it was a lack of money to get home, as they wouldn't have had the scratch to open in 1912.

#### Season of 1912

In a three-page letter found in the Oklahoma Historical Society dated January 3, 1912, the President of the First



National Bank of Fairbury, Nebraska, D. B. Cropsey, was replying back to "High Grass" Campbell about the Campbell circus still owing him money. The Campbell men denied this claim. The bank knew the show was in trouble and had been trying to find a buyer all winter. A couple of the lenders even went so far as to say they would take 25 cents on the dollar to get the loans paid. The Campbell boys, on the other hand, had no idea how much they owed according to the letter.

While the Campbells themselves returned to Fairbury, the show itself wintered in Texas. The show opened the season in Beaumont, Texas on March 30th.

The end started coming quickly for the Campbell Bros. Great Consolidated Shows in 1912. Times were tough on everyone and the good years were now behind them. The February 17, 1912 *Billboard* carried a notice of a suit brought by the performers and other employees in Beaumont, Texas on February 9th against the Campbell Bros. for non-payment of eleven weeks of 1911 wages totaling \$1,105.45. Yet, plans continued to go ahead with a 1912 tour.

The *Billboard* carried small tidbits of information in the March 2, 1912 edition stating that James Greer would be the trainmaster. The season would open on March 30, coming out of the Beaumont, Texas winter quarters and Fred Hatfield was busy overseeing all winters quarters activities. The May 18, 1912 *Billboard* carried a complete review of the show with exceptionally high marks going to H.W. Winegart's concert band of 30 pieces.

While many of the year's performances were noted in newspaper articles as two rings and an elevated stage, the 1912 *Billboard* review states three rings and stages in the performance. The 1912 review offered the following show performance:

Display #1 - Grand Pageant representing all Nations.

Display #2 -The Seven Leonderes, Grecian Statuary Act.

Display #3 - Equestriennes-Ring 1 Mlle. Greer, Ring 2 Leona Abbey, Ring 3 Miss Crandall.

Display #4 - Ring 1 Dan Leon with elephant, ponies and dog, Ring 2 Daniel Bushnell with seals, Ring 3 Alex White with elephant and ponies.

Display #5 - Aerial ladders, Roman Rings by Burdell & Zanda, Aerial bars by Londuras Troupe from Mexico.

Display #6 - Horsemanship Ring 1 Dan Leon, Ring 2 Mons. Crandell, Ring 3 Lewis Herrington, with clowns on track & stages.

Display #7 - Equilibrist and Jugglers, Ring 1 Harold the Great, stage 1 Krio Troupe of Japs, Ring 2 Fred Martin, Stage 2, Rolling globes by Miss Negles and Marie Manteon, Ring 3 The Rivers family.

Display #8 - The Flying act of the LeTort troupe, The Rockwells a casting act, Burdell and Zanda plus Clack & Clack doing Double Trapeze, Miss Mabel Chipman doing balancing trapeze, and The Three Nathans doing a Triple Trapeze number.

Display #9 - Six Thoroughbred Horses ridden by young ladies.

Display #10 - Performing elephants Ring 1 Robert Miles, Ring 2 Art Green, Ring 3 Bert Smith.

Display #11 - Wire acts - Ring 1 the Great Ray, Stage 1

Jessie Leon and her doves, Ring 2 The Virginia troupe, Stage 2 The Mexican Wire Wonder Hova Mantacon, Ring 3 The Famous Clacks.

Display #12 - Twenty-five Clowns throughout the arena

Display #13 - Double Bounding Jockey acts using the three bareback riding Scotch Collie dogs Ring, Rex, and Regent. Ring 1 the Two Crandalls, Ring 2 Burgess and Burgess, Ring 3 Mlle. Greer and Fred Crandall.

Display #14 - The Great Lavassuer, French-Canadian Hercules.

Display #15 - Mule Hurdles Ring 1 O. E. Dops, Ring 2 Joe Cadee, Ring 3 Roy Chapman

Display #16 - Contortion acts by Messrs. Al Clack, Mazetta, Julian Kent, Kenneth Nash, Lindsey Wilson and the Misses North, Labelle, Aurora Manticon, and Mlle. DeLong.

Display #17 - Carrying act and Two Olympians Ring 1 Sadie and Everett Crandall, Ring 2 Marie Howes and Al Gonzales, Ring 3 Mabel Alton and William Mier.

Display #18 - Capt. Jerome and his eight Russian Cossack riders.

Display #19 - Acrobats and Brother act Ring1 The Three LeComas, Stage 1 The Crandall Trio, Ring 2 the Monticon Family of 10, Stage 2 The Altons, Ring 3 Alex and White.

Display #20 - Races - 1st race Ladies Flat race, 2nd race dog race, 3rd race Jockey race, 4th race pony and Monkey race, 5th race man against horse, 6th race tandem race, 7th race Liberty race, 8th race Cowboy, Cossack, and Indian, 9th race Roman standing, 10th and final race is a Chariot race.



A tableau wagon in a Campbell parade. Pfening Archives.

To present such a terrific performance the tent needed to be large. According to the inventory on the subsequent claim by the Fairbury First National Bank, the Campbell Bros. Shows were utilizing a 130 foot round top with a 38-foot, a 40-foot, and a 42-foot middle. The center poles are listed as being 36 feet long. These seem rather short when compared to Ringling's massive 62 footers in later years.

The rest of the show's canvas during its final season included the menagerie, a 72 x 90 with four bale ring center poles listed as 38-feet long. The side show top was a 60-foot round with two 40-foot middles using 25-foot long center poles and eight banners being 10-feet x 18-feet each. There were three horse tents, 30-feet x 60-feet. The dressing room top was a 60-foot round but doesn't



mention a middle section with two 24-foot tall center poles. The dining top is only listed as tent, stakes, and poles and gives no dimensions; however, the show carried twelve tables.

The Sverre Braathen files contained a railroad contract that gives the Campbell consist as 2 advance cars, 6 stock cars, 11 flatcars, and 6 coaches. A noticeable change shows up later in the season. In a review on August 12th in Fairbury, Nebraska in the *Fairbury Gazette*, the show was moving on a total of 23 cars: two advertising cars; a pie car (Nebraska); one elephant car; five stock cars; nine flat cars; four coaches, (Boston, Fairbury, Omaha, and Highlander); and the private car, the Caledonia.<sup>57</sup> I point out this change as the final replevin only shows these 9 flatcars for sale. Assuming the Braathen records are correct, this shows the Campbells had gotten rid of two flatcars and wagons that would have not been needed anymore. The above also shows a reduction in the size of the Big Top. The show there was given in two rings and on one elevated stage. Notable acts were the bareback riding of Mrs. Greer, the Russian Cossacks and the Greer performing elephants.



An eight horse hitch pulling a Campbell tableau in parade in Norton, Kansas on August 20, 1908. Pfening Archives.

The Campbell outfit was on the road, doing fair business and fighting the coming depression, but was getting nowhere fast. Having worked their way around the country, the Campbell show returned to its roots in Fairbury on August 10th. A special to the *Billboard* on August 10th told of the Campbell aggregation being forced to close in Fairbury, Nebraska, with a \$26,000.00 mortgage owed to the Fairbury bank. Most, if not all, of the performers and musicians were owed back wages totaling almost \$8,000. The show had garnered just \$2,300 in the last two days. That small amount was split evenly among the performers as the show disbanded. It was hoped a scaled down show on eight to ten cars would continue. That never happened.

The Fairbury bank had set in motion a civil suit vs. the Campbell Bros. Consolidated Shows to cover their inter-

ests in unpaid loans. John Heasty, acting as the Trustee, asked the Jefferson County District Court on August 10, 1912 to turn over all holdings of the Campbell Bros. Shows. The request was based on non-payment of multiple loans owed to the Fairbury bank under a chattel mortgage dated January 22, 1912 for 17 promissory notes: one for \$10,000; two for \$5,000; four for \$4,000; four for \$2,000; and six for \$1,000 each. The suit totaled \$50,000 owed to the First National Bank of Fairbury and the show's holdings were only worth \$15,000, including the train, all animals, and equipment. The entire show was then relocated to the circus farm south of the Little Blue River.

The *Fairbury Gazette* stated the ownership of the Campbell organization included Al G. Campbell, Ed Campbell, Virg Campbell, Fred Hatfield, D. B. Cropsey, J. W. McDonnell, and J. P. Turner, with the last three each owning \$100.00 worth of stock and the first four owning the remainder of \$100,000.00 of stock. Al G. Campbell was President, Ed Campbell was Vice-President, and J. P. Turner was the Secretary-Treasurer. The Board of Directors was Al G. Campbell, Ed Campbell, D. B. Cropsey, J. W. McDonnell, and J. P. Turner. I might add this is the only mention I have found of the Directors by name.

Once the show was attached, Lee Greer, a long time friend of the family, filed a suit against the show on August 26, 1912 in District Court, Jefferson County, Fairbury, Nebraska. He was represented by J.C. Hartigan. The suit stated that around January 10, 1910, Lee Greer entered into an oral agreement with the other owners that he should be compensated for the use of his three elephants in the form of \$70.00 a week during the thirty-week performance season of 1910 and the thirty-four week performance season of 1911. This added up to \$5,480.00 of which he had only been paid \$680.00 so far. The suit thus asked for the remaining \$4800.00 plus 7% interest per annum from the first day of January, 1912.<sup>58</sup>

Between the 1912 show opening to closing, some animals were sold, traded, re-possessed or whatever by the Campbell Bros. Great Consolidated Shows. The court appointed inventory lists the menagerie stock as having a Zehn Bull, a Black Sybena Wolf, a Male Bengal Tiger, Pair of Female Lions, Pair of Asiatic Lions, a Yak, a female Lion, a female Leopard, two Ocelots, a female Audad, a Male Antelope, a single hump camel, three elephants, (Annie, Alice, and Lizzie) and a Philapena Bull.

Wm. P. Hall repossessed one of the elephants, Alice, along with one mare and fifteen horses for a note due under a prior lease or chattel mortgage dated January 18, 1912. The aforementioned note was one of three due Mr. Hall, each for \$2,200.00, one being due Sept. 1, 1912, one due Sept. 1, 1913, and the last one due Sept. 1, 1914 each at 8% interest from the filing date of January 26, 1912 in Jefferson County, Nebraska courts. Alice didn't want to leave the show. She was loaded into a boxcar and chained by her back legs. Once the engine hooked up, she broke the chains and came tumbling out of the car. They tried this two more times. By this time she had destroyed the car, torn the roof off and buckled the walls, and the train left without her. It would be a couple days before they



would try again to get her moving. Reportedly, she did not want to leave the side of a male elephant she had become very friendly with.

There were numerous contradictions of information. The final replevin states three elephants. Yet the *Fairbury Gazette* says four elephants were taken to the river to swim. Since Alice, Annie and Lizzie are mentioned by name, it is my assumption that Fritz, the young male, is one of the Lee Greer elephants.

A couple of the most notable differences in animals are the camels, which had been as many as twelve in 1910 was now down to one. Three elephants in the final inventory only represent the eleven elephants that were reported in a couple eyewitness accounts throughout the 1912 season.

Virg Campbell filed suit against the Campbell Bros. Show on August 27, 1912 and placed an attachment against John Heasty, John Heasty as Trustee, D. B. Cropsey, and the First National Bank of Fairbury. He attached all of the train cars for payment of three notes each of \$1,465 due November 1912, 1913, and 1914 as payment for his shares when he got out of the circus business. D. B. Cropsey had been with bank for about thirty years. The 1912 season closed on August 10 in Fairbury, Nebraska.

An auction of all property was scheduled on September 2nd, 1912. Many folks from around the country attended the sale. The sale was postponed and rescheduled for September 10th. Before that sale could even begin, a sheriff from Lincoln, Nebraska came down with an attachment for almost \$10,000.00 from the Ackerman-Quigley Lithograph Company of Kansas City, Missouri for posters and paper printed for the show. This attachment came by way of a Federal Court.<sup>59</sup> A motion was brought forth shortly thereafter by the First National Bank of Fairbury's Trustee, Mr. John Heasty, before Federal Judge T. C. Munger to release the federal Marshall's levy of property as suit had already been brought in state court by the bank.<sup>60</sup> The Standard Printing Co. of St. Paul, Minnesota, also filed a claim on September 5, 1912 in Jefferson County courts for \$868.26 for unpaid printing of posters, date sheets, printed matter, advertising matter, and prepaid shipping charges.<sup>61</sup>

William P. Hall came to Fairbury to look things over. The September 13, 1912 edition of the *Fairbury Gazette* told of his arrival and that he was there to buy the Campbell horses. After learning of the sale being postponed again, he immediately left. Once again the auction was rescheduled for Monday September 23rd. Only 7 or 8 bidders were there and they were all horse buyers. Most of the horses were gone already. John Heasty, trustee, bought the entire show for \$17,500.00. His intention was to sell it.

The legal problems weren't just confined to the Campbell Bros. Show. Al G. Campbell had diversified his holdings and partnered with W. H. Coulter earlier in the year in the Cole Bros. World Toured Shows. They borrowed \$1600 from Frances Wieland by way of a lien on the title to her property in Kansas. She also filed suit in District Court of Jefferson County on November 4th, 1912, asking for judgment for her \$1600, plus 7% interest

payable from the first of March 1912, plus court costs. An appraisal of the Cole Bros. World Toured Shows #2 advertising car and all equipment was made for \$525 and attached all on November 4th, 1912.<sup>62</sup>

In actions taken in the Jefferson County Courthouse, Kitty Campbell filed for divorce from Ed Campbell on August 22, 1912 on grounds of abuse and cruelty stemming from multiple incidents dating back to 1910.<sup>63</sup> Calmer heads prevailed and on September 5, 1912 all actions were dismissed.

The *Billboard* carried an article on the completion of the sale of the Campbell Bros. Shows on November 9, 1912 (page 22). The winning bid of \$25,000 came from a group of men from Omaha, Nebraska. Jule Althaus, Charles Steffens, J. S. Smith, Clyde A. Smith and an unknown banker were listed as the buyers of the show's equipment, animals, and 25 railcars. The equipment and properties were to be moved shortly to the Steffens farm near Ft. Calhoun, Nebraska for the winter. The Smiths had been horse buyers in Norfolk, Nebraska.

Two weeks later the *Billboard* published a retraction saying the show was not sold. The Campbell Bros. were still in litigation and the show could not be sold until after the December term of court was held. Virg Campbell, who had left the show after the 1909 season, bought the high school horses and ponies. Most of the baggage stock was sold to a horse trader near St. Joseph, Missouri.<sup>64</sup>



Massive number of baggage stock being unloaded at Campbell train. Pfening Archives.

The final decision of the John Heasty, Trustee vs. the Campbell Bros. Consolidated Shows case was handed down in the District Court of Jefferson County, State of Nebraska on December 7, 1912, by a jury of their peers. When the verdict was read, the First National Bank of Fairbury was entitled to immediate possession of all properties.<sup>65</sup> A motion for a new trial was filed by Fred Hatfield the same day.

The chattel that remained was purchased by a new corporation made up of former owners, A. G. Campbell, Fred Hatfield, and Lee Greer around January 15th of 1913. They intended to be on the road by April, with many of the former Campbell employees coming with them. Their intentions were to reduce the show to a fifteen-car show carrying fifty draft horses, thirty ring



stock, twenty ponies, four elephants, four camels, and other lead stock. The article stated that work had already begun on fixing things up.<sup>66</sup>

The *Fairbury Gazette* stated what was left of the Campbell show was sold to Al Campbell, Fred Hatfield and Lee Greer for \$10,000. They got 22 railcars, some wagons, three elephants, seven or eight lions, some tigers, leopards, wild cats, and more common animals. They were planning on selling about ten cars and a few wagons to raise the money to get them on the road in the spring. This causes some confusion in the elephant count again as only three elephants are listed in the final replevin with one going to Wm. P. Hall. Now there are three elephants again.

The *Fairbury Journal* gave a 90-year remembrance on April 22, 2003 when it revisited the property split of the former Campbell Bros. Circus. Seven railcars, some animals, and equipment were sold to Rice Bros. Circus of Minnesota. Previous owners Al and Ed Campbell, Lee Greer, and Fred Hatfield took the remainder on the road as "Cole Bros." They had bought it back at a bankruptcy sale for \$10,000.00.



A Cole Bros. Circus parade in 1913 using Campbell equipment. Pfening Archives.

The Joseph Bradbury article in the *White Tops*, September-October 1968 states that in March of 1913, William P. Hall bought the Campbell Bros. Great Consolidated Show's remaining animals and show equipment. The *Lancaster Excelsior* stated that Al Campbell was in town getting the show equipment ready to go on the road in the April 18, 1913 edition.

The *Fairbury Gazette* reported that 16 cars were being readied for the Cole Bros. Circus after selling seven cars to Rice Bros. Circus. This time they loaded out of Fairbury on April 25th and headed to Lebanon, Kansas for their opening date the next day. They had received a shipment of animals from Kansas City including two cinnamon bears, a leopard, a wild hog, two anteaters and two gorillas (probably Chimpanzees). They also booked the Wild West owned by "Pigeon" Nelson of Junction City, Kansas. By May 3rd the *Fairbury Gazette* was reporting a train derailment had severely damaged one car that was returned to Fairbury to be fixed. During the very first performance, a section of seating collapsed with no one being hurt. The show ended up out west in drought con-

ditions, small pox epidemics and generally bad business. Times were tough, but they stayed on the road until late October when the Schuyler County *Republican* announced the show was back at the Hall farm and the *Lancaster Excelsior* stated that William P. Hall had bought the 14-car Cole Bros. Circus.

Al Campbell visited relatives in Fairbury for a few days in December of 1913, indicative of the fact that he was not residing there anymore. He found his way over to the Rice Bros. Circus in 1914. Owned by J. H. Garrett, the show was a 10-car rail show. Al Campbell was the General Manager.<sup>67</sup>

The Cole Bros. Circus titled was used again in 1914.

Fred Hatfield took a show out again as a wagon operation. The *Fairbury News and Gazette* reported on May 7, 1914 that the show pulled out of Fairbury on twelve, new, goodly-painted wagons with all new canvas, one elephant Susie, Bells and Lucy, high school horses, a 12 pony act, and an eight-piece band. The show would parade everyday and carried several people from Fairbury including Lee Greer.

Much of the Campbell equipment was used on various shows for a few years and then it all disappeared from sight. The Barton & Bailey Circus utilized several pieces, in particular the steam calliope. Of particular interest was a contract found in the Schuyler County Courthouse dated April 23rd, 1915 whereby John A. Barton sold to Wm. P. Hall: two rail coaches already lettered as Barton & Bailey; several head of horses already branded with the "H" of William P. Hall's farm; one tableau #95; and the calliope. The music device was detailed as "One 31 whistle steam calliope, 15 feet 6 inches long: body painted red with carved gilt trimmed in aluminum: aluminum colored boiler, and pipes, dragon carving on sides; inside of body painted blue and red; sunburst wheels." The Barton & Bailey show went out in 1915 and folded in Montana in August, when it was returned to Lancaster, Missouri, after Hall paid the freight charges to return it to his farm from Montana.

The legal problems were not over for the Campbell Bros. Circus. The Campbell defendants petitioned the federal courts in 1915, asking that their bankruptcy proceedings be overturned on the grounds of their "creditors having failed to take the proper evidence in order to prosecute their proceedings." The involuntary injunction of bankruptcy was filed against the Campbells in September of 1912 by Everett Crandall (\$499.75), Lindsay Wilson (\$120.35), and Lewis Nichols (\$120.00).<sup>68</sup> Nothing has been located by this author to indicate who these people are. It is possible they were local business owners, but that is merely speculation.

#### **Dispersal of the Campbell Bros. Parade Wagons**

Following the acquisition of the Campbell Bros. physical plant, William P. Hall proceeded to lease pieces of it to various showmen who framed railroad circuses at his farm. It became one of several complete shows Hall purchased (including Walter L. Main, Lemon Bros. and others). The result was that outfits created at Hall's place were often a crazy quilt of vehicles with different origins, dependent upon what was available at the time and the showman's personal desires. Hall seldom sold vehicles



outright; they made more money for him leased under chattel mortgages, recycled from one failed circus to another. What follows is a summary of the known utilization of various Campbell Bros. parade wagons. To the best of our knowledge, no remnants survive today from any Campbell vehicle.

The lead bandwagon of the Campbell Bros. served in the same role on the 1913 Cole Bros. Circus. Surprisingly, it hasn't been placed on any Hall farm outfits during the next five years, which is surely testimony to the paucity of relevant photographs. The body was removed from the wagon gearing and mounted on a Service Motor Truck

Company truck chassis and conveyed the side show band in parade on the 1918 Coop & Lent motorized circus. The circus wagon bodies were salvaged and stored for a while in Wabash, Indiana, but none of them are known to have served any traveling show thereafter. It's possible that the bandwagon may have been on the predecessor 1915 Hugo Bros. and the 1916-1917 Coop & Lent railroad shows, which would fill in most of the intervening years. Another possibility is the 1915 Barton & Bailey circus. The former Pawnee Bill's Wild West tableau with pipe organ decorations was also on Cole Bros. in 1913, followed by use on Orton Bros. in 1916. It bore the number 10 during these years. It was last seen in a recycled, older photograph published in a 1917 Dan Rice Circus courier.

A tableau that cannot be traced away from Campbell or the Hall farm is the one that originated in the 1880s on Adam Forepaugh. It bore the number 11 in 1900 and was reassigned the number 20 by 1908. It came to the Campbells via their acquisition of the John F. Hummel outfit. It was rebuilt by the time it appeared on Hummel and was rebuilt again with Campbell, each time losing some of the elegance that had once made it a fine parade vehicle. Where it went after 1912 has not been discovered.

At least two of the smaller Campbell cages were sold to J. A. Jones and appeared with the Jones Bros. flat car circus in the mid-1910s. The smaller of the two dens had the skyboard from a third Campbell cage, suggesting that perhaps at least three went to Jones. These may have gone to Campbell, Bailey & Hutchinson.

Joe Bradbury reported that the tableau featuring an unidentifiable carved creature on the side may have been on Barton & Bailey in 1915. Originally it was on Campbell as a bandchariot type of vehicle. It later appeared in a photograph of the Hall farm published in the March 1918 issue of *St. Nicholas Magazine*. The tableau last did duty on Campbell, Bailey & Hutchinson in 1920 to 1922. It was the lead bandwagon in their street parade. Six of the Campbell cages were also with this troupe, according to information supplied by Col. Wm. H. Woodcock to Bradbury. The tableau and a few of the cages are documented in C B & H photography. Some or all of these vehicles may have been acquired by the C. D. Scott Greater Shows, a railroad carnival.

One of the three-arch Campbell cages was sold by Hall to J. H. Garrett for his 1913 circus. It went with some of his Rice Bros. property to carnival proprietor Clarence A. Wortham. Tom Scaperlanda photographed it coming

apart at the Wortham winter quarters in San Antonio, Texas, in the 1920s.

The new in 1902 Campbell steam calliope was on Cole Bros. in 1913 and then Barton & Bailey in 1915. It was returned to the Hall farm and departed Lancaster for the last time in 1919 as part of the Rhoda Royal circus. It was destroyed in a railroad wreck sustained by that troupe in 1921.

All of the above pieces were part of the Campbell show when it closed in 1912. Two other, older circus wagons had been on the show previously. The old John O'Brien circus, Fielding-built band chariot that dated back to the 1870s was photographed twice on Campbell, with no hard dating beyond the first railroad year of 1899. It may have been in questionable condition and was perhaps replaced by the other band chariot vehicle with the unidentified carved beast on the side. The Fielding band chariot has not been discovered on any traveling show subsequent to Campbell and it may simply have been retired and dismantled. The Ohlsen calliope with the



A Campbell tableau wagon with the black side show band on board. Pfening Archives.

Forepaugh circus was with the Campbell show only in 1901. The brothers ordered an entirely new calliope from Sullivan & Eagle for 1902. Starting in 1902, Castle leased the 22-year old Forepaugh device to carnivals, circuses and Wild West troupes, continuing the practice through at least 1911. It is thought to have passed into the possession of his last calliope player, who continued to rent it out. No knowledge of it has been found after 1914

#### Epilog

The Campbell name didn't disappear from show annals. William P. "High Grass" Campbell took out Campbell's Circus from 1915 to 1918. William P. "Low Grass" Campbell took out the Campbell Bros. Circus from 1920 to 1922. John Barry continued this title into 1923. The Campbell, Bailey, & Hutchison Circus went out from 1920 to 1921 with Wm. P. "High Grass" Campbell and Fred Bailey Hutchison as owners. Wm. P. "Low Grass" Campbell joined them as an owner in 1922. Al G. Campbell is found on the Campbell, Bailey, & Hutchison show where he was referred to as "Wire Grass" Campbell. H.W. Campbell took out the H.W. Campbell Shows from 1919 to 1921. In 1930 he teamed up with J. P. McHale to take out the Campbell Bros. Circus. William "Lucky Bill" Newton added the title to his show in 1923 and 1924 calling it the Campbell Bros. & Lucky Bill Shows.<sup>69</sup>



In the *White Tops* of November-December 1950 issue on page 8 Charlie Campbell says that the title of Campbell Bros. Great Consolidated Shows was willed to him at the passing of Ed Campbell. He notes he has the contract in his possession of the 1902 Ringling Hippo lease.

The activities of Fred Hatfield and Lee Greer were probably not over in the show business world as evidenced by a few titles that will require further study. John Polacsek provided the titles of Greer and Cannon's Wild West and Trained Wild Animal Show for 1915, Greer and Hatfield's Trained Animal Shows in 1916. Robert Parkinson's *Directory of American Circuses* gives a title of Glenn and Hatfield in 1922 and Campbell and Hatfield Circus in 1923. His book also shows that Mr. and Mrs. Hatfield had the Lee and Howe Circus on the road from 1931 to 1934. The Lee and Howe show had a lion, leopard, a monkey, dogs and ponies in addition to aerialists.<sup>70</sup> Fred married Delta Wood, but when has never been established. By the time of Fred's death in 1939, Delta Hatfield was not listed as a survivor. The family tree says she passed away in 1939.

Lee Greer disappears from the written record after 1915, passing away on Dec. 30, 1924 in Sapulpa, Oklahoma, where he was staying with relatives. Two brothers and two sisters survived him. He is buried in Mounds, Oklahoma. He was 52 years old.

The matriarch of the family, Mary Albina Connell Campbell, born on July 8, 1834 in Adams County, Ohio, passed away in Fairbury in 1926 at the age of 92. Virg's wife, Maude E. passed away on May 25, 1930.

In 1941, Virg Campbell accompanied researchers from the University of Nebraska back to Pawnee City where the massive 1904 animal fire had occurred. The researchers had uncovered two of the elephant skeletons in 1906. This time they went after the third and final elephant skeleton. The section foreman, Mr. Frank Sanders, who helped them locate the burial site, was also the same section foreman that had buried the animals in 1904. All three skeletons are now in a University of Nebraska Museum.<sup>71</sup>

Allen G. Campbell, born on March 4, 1858, passed away in Jefferson County, Nebraska on March 4, 1937. In an article written by Levi Bloyd in the Lincoln *Sunday Journal and Star* on February 20th, 1938, he stated that Ed Campbell and his sister, Mrs. Hatfield, made their home together, while Fred Hatfield was still in show business with a dog and pony show. Fred Hatfield died in Paragould, Arkansas with his dog and pony show on July 16, 1939 at the age of 63.<sup>72</sup> He was buried in Fairbury, Nebraska. Josie Campbell Hatfield, born on February 25, 1855, passed away on February 5, 1949 at the age of 94.

She is buried in Fairbury beside her son, Fred Hatfield. Edwin F. Campbell having been born on May 26, 1860, died April 8, 1950 at the age of 90. Virg Campbell stayed with farming the rest of his working days. He died in Fairbury, Nebraska on June 30, 1953.<sup>73</sup> The entire Campbell family and the Hatfields are laid to rest in Fairbury, Nebraska. Only Lee Greer is located elsewhere, in Mounds, Oklahoma.

In a very interesting article written in 1987 by Joyce Davenport, she along with her husband visited Fairbury and met Estaline Carpenter who wrote a small book on the history of the Campbell Circus. They visited the old elephant barn, which was then owned by Stanley Kasperek. The barn still had the rings in the floor for the chains. They then drove about twelve miles north of town to Steele City. Here they entered the blacksmith shop with the key that Mrs. Carpenter had loaned them. Inside was an elephant head piece and a clown's broom. Back in Fairbury, the horse barn, stables, and training barns stood where the Light Plant is now.<sup>74</sup>

I received a nice letter from a Fairbury resident by the name of Audrey L. Cook, who remembered Virg's daughter, Gertrude, riding her horse up and down the lane leading to their house. Virg Campbell's cornfield was on the western edge of the Fairbury town limits. The Fairbury swimming pool is in this field now.



The Campbell up town wagon, a walk through that was sent to the down town in each city. Pfening Archives.

The Jefferson County Historical Society has in its possession the strong box of the Campbell Bros. Shows. The Fairbury Museum has a sledgehammer, some clown

shoes, and the dinner bell from the cookhouse, a wash-tub, an umbrella, a trunk, and an elephant blanket in their possession.

Having received several emails from the Fairbury Public Library and the Fairbury Museum, as of 2008, the original elephant barn still stands on the Kasperek property located south of the Little Blue River in Fairbury, Nebraska which was the Campbell Bros. last known winter quarters.

I have no doubt that more information will be found in months to come. I have had the great pleasure to have met Sam Campbell, a fellow CHS member and a great grandson of "High Grass" Campbell, who has offered some amazing help in following the family lineage as well as circus historical data.

I give tremendous thanks to Richard Reynolds III and Fred Dahlinger, Jr. for really being my mentors as a budding circus historian by offering their great advice, counsel, and direction for which I will be forever indebted. Many thanks go out to Fred D. Pfening, Jr. and Fred D.



Pfening, III who graciously shared the documentation in their private collections with me.

Erin Foley, the Archivist at the Circus World Museum's Research Library, has been most helpful over the last two years.

I cannot conclude this piece without giving thanks to the fantastic ladies at the Jefferson County Courthouse in Fairbury, Nebraska, who were able to dig out these many old records and provide me with copies of all this historical data. The Fairbury Museum was instrumental in allowing me an insight into their collection and the sharing of several of their photos with me. I hope that this article has finally given a better feel for one of the greatest circus operations to travel America at the turn of the century.

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# Frank C. Bostock

## Wild Animal Trainer and Carnival Owner

By Fred D. Pfening, Jr.

At first glance the life of Frank Bostock looks quite ordinary. Contemporary evidence suggests he grew up with the family show in England and then went to America to try his luck—as if this made him somehow invisible and unworthy of consideration thereafter. But guess what? It wasn't like that at all. Dave Page sifted through the pieces of a remarkable life.

For someone often talked about as the greatest showman of his age Frank Bostock is a difficult man to pin down. But if you look hard enough for long enough, you will find solid evidence to back up the claim that he actually was one of the greats. The bald facts are these. He first went to America in 1894, when in his late twenties. He died in 1912, aged only 46. Between these two dates he did the following:

- Owned and ran carnival companies that traveled extensively in America.

- Traveled extensively in his own right, attending street fairs.

- Owned and ran various wild animal shows.

- Was responsible (indirectly) for establishing the Prospect Park Zoo (at Brooklyn, New York), and the Selig Zoo in Los Angeles, as well as zoos at Indianapolis, Milwaukee and Baltimore.

- Became a big player at Coney Island.

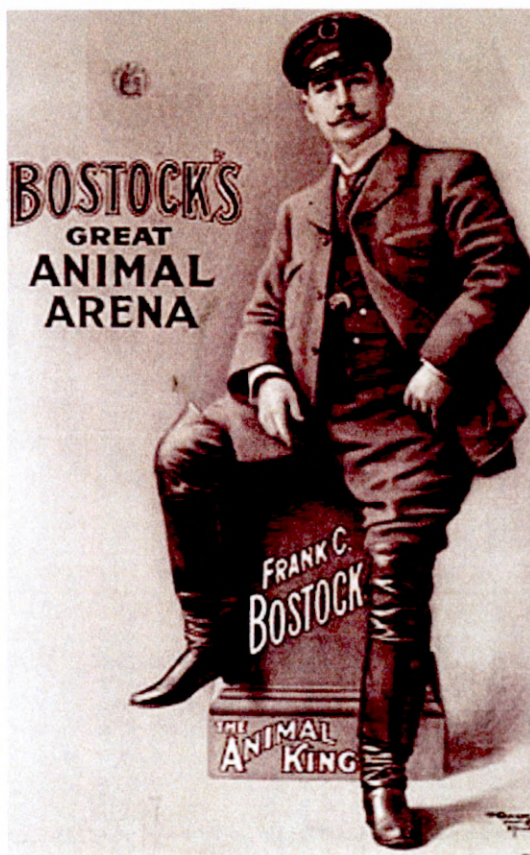
- Was a Midway regular at various major expositions.

- Owned the Paris Hippodrome on Blvd de Clincy.

- Regularly returned to Europe to promote his shows.

However, the most surprising thing to emerge about Frank Bostock was he was not alone for most of this great adventure. His traveling companions from England in 1894 were destined to become bigger names in America than he was.

Frank Bostock was born in 1866 into a famous menagerie family and grew up on the Bostock and Wombwell show. His father was married to George Wombwell's daughter. Wombwell died in 1850, leaving three menageries and an illustrious name.



Frank Bostock was educated at Klvedon Collage, in Essex, and it was intended that he should enter the church. His early encounters with wild animals determined otherwise.

Bostock's brother Edward took to the road on his own in 1883. Frank briefly became his animal trainer.

Information about him thereafter is hard to find but the point of him being a showbiz insider from birth is important. Writing in his book *Menageries, Circuses and Theatres* Edward Bostock said of himself: "While I should not go the length of claiming that menagerists, like poets, are born and not made, I believe that my long continued success as a showman goes to prove the immense advantage of being born into the business." That applied equally to his brother and provided him with the resources required for a trip to the USA.

Frank C. Bostock, The Animal King. Ringling Museum of Art, Tibbals Digital Collection.

Bostock formed a partnership with the Feraris in 1894 to tour a carnival. Francis A. Ferari was born in Hull, England on September 15, 1863. His brother Joseph G. was born in Leeds, on January 4, 1868. Joseph Ferari had never worked a trained wild animal act until one of his relatives died unexpectedly, leaving an act without a trainer.

In 1894 the Ferari brothers and Frank Bostock brought their equipment and animals to America and were destined to contribute much toward the development of the carnival industry. Many of their ideas became basic operating procedures as the American industry moved quickly toward consolidation of its smaller enterprises. The Bostock Ferari show opened on Flatbush Avenue lot in Brooklyn and later moved to Coney Island.

According to the Outdoor Amusement Business Association of America, "the carnival made its debut in 1894 when Frank C. Bostock brought his model of an English Fair to the United States." He arrived in America a seasoned showman who was able to teach the locals a



thing or two about showbiz on the road. Bostock and the Feraris brought their own wagons with them, for example, many of them ornately hand-carved, and it was from this (and perhaps not the American circus) that carnival operators learned to move their shows by wagon. The Bostock-Feraris introduced carved show fronts to America. The show traveled by rail, probably on system flats.

An important point to make is that when Bostock and the Feraris arrived in America carnival was still finding its feet and looking at ways forward.

Until 1893 the term Midway, or Midway Plaisance to be exact, had never been used in the context of a traveling show in America. The Midway Plaisance was a street that formed part of the World's Columbian Exposition (or World's Fair), held in Chicago in 1893. Essentially it was the place within the fair that housed all the shows.

The World's Fair was immensely popular drawing over 27 million visitors and it didn't take long before American showmen were looking at ways of taking the Midway on the road. After a couple of abortive attempts the "Chicago Midway Plaisance Amusement Company" was born in 1895 and although it ultimately collapsed shortly afterwards there was no looking back for what was to become the American carnival.

Legend has it that when Francis Ferari left his father's show, he started a novelty act and exhibited such attractions as giants, midgets and other freaks. In 1881 he toured the UK with a group of Zulus. In 1892 he married Emma Warwick, a showman's daughter. The same year it is said he bought an established wild animal show (which one is unclear) and changed its name to "Noah's Ark."

Shortly after arriving in America the English showmen appear to have split up. In 1895, for example, the New York State Fair at Syracuse New York featured Bostock's Trained Animal Arena. The fair was promoted by a man called Schmidt (a product of the Chicago Exposition) and it is said that Bostock did more shows with Schmidt after this.

The Feraris, meanwhile, opened their show at Flatbush Avenue, Brooklyn, but the brothers and Bostock later moved to Coney Island together. A W.O. Taylor, writing in *Billboard* many years later, said: "Another step in the formation of the American Carnival occurred in 1895, when a tramp steamer unloaded a queer mess of show stuff at Coney Island New York. There was a small but gaudy animal show known as Noah's Ark in which a boxing Kangaroo; Jolly, the elephant; Wallace, the untamable lion; a tattooed Yak; some performing lions and 'what-nots' were exhibited. This outfit was manned by a bunch of Englishmen with



the broadest accents. Frank Bostock looked good in a uniform in a cage of lions and Francis Ferari looked like a Spanish Don with the commanding air of a sea captain."

The Bostock and Wombwell show in England.

These capable showmen didn't stay at Coney Island as they had too much mobility to stay long in one place, unlike contemporary American shows that took a week to

move and set up. In 1896 they put out a small show which toured the New England States for a few weeks. They had brought with them several fairground rides and could furnish a large proportion of any Midway at larger fairs and expositions. It is said that had this company stayed on the road for the full season it would have been the first ever collective amusement organization in America.

"Ye Olde Englishe Faire" carried all the elements of what was to become carnival. Among its attractions were: Col. Francis Ferari's trained wild animals, Captain Joseph Ferari's trained dogs, ponies and monkeys, Kemp's Royal Midgets, Cottrel's Deep Sea Divers, George Kemp's talking fish, Billy Russell's Gondolas and concessions, one of which was a coconut sheet. Before the season ended Francis Ferari exhibited this company at the Toronto Exposition.

During the 1897 season Bostock's Wild Animal Arena played events in a number of places, ending the season in Chicago, where he operated a zoo-like attraction during the winter of 1897-98.

In 1898 Bostock acquired the right to use the name "Hagenbeck" and placed a show of that name into the

Poster used by the Francis Ferrari show.







Poster used by Bostock. Ringling Museum of Art, Tibbals Digital Collection.

Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition in Omaha, Nebraska where it was a feature attraction. The Trans-Mississippi ran from June 1 to November 1. This appears to have been Bostock's first foray into expositions, where as well as the "Hagenbach" show he presented Chiquita, The Living Doll and a Gondola Switchback (something Americans referred to as the Golden Chariots).

Bostock was also at Canton, Ohio in 1898 for "The Elks' Mid-summer Street Carnival" and during that year he formed the short-lived Mighty Midway Company with promoter Victor D. Leavitt. This company dealt in side show games and its main objective, it seems, was to "spoil" the operations of other companies of this type. This unit operated concurrently with the large show in Omaha.

Bostock and Leavitt had no dates of their own booked during that season, but played big venues other shows had booked and promoted, particularly the Gaskill and Chartier Shows. The idea was to rent ground alongside other shows and operate with a free admission on the front gate (it was customary to charge admission for sideshow games at this time which, presumably, were set out like an amusement arcade). Because they had much better games than the competition Bostock and Leavitt were able to do big business without much expense. It wasn't until the later part of the season that Gaskill and Chartier were able to get shut-out contracts in the towns they had booked.

1898 was considered a bad year for other shows but turned out a big winner for Bostock and Leavitt, who is said to have remarked later that their show had grossed \$90,000, a huge sum in those days.

1899 appears to have been an eventful year. In April the Frank C. Bostock Mighty Midway and Ye Olde English Pleasure Faire opened in Brooklyn, New York, with Bostock as the sole owner. Francis Ferari was

listed as an associate and Victor Leavitt business manager. Dick Collins came over from England and became Bostock's press agent. A unit called the Bostock Carnival Company was also seen at Wilmington, Ohio that year.

It was also in 1899 that Bostock and the Ferari brothers finally got together to form the Bostock-Ferari Midway Carnival Company, which toured until the end of the 1902 season. This is perhaps why Bostock is said to have sold an entire animal show to Percy Munday, another Englishman, at some point during the year.

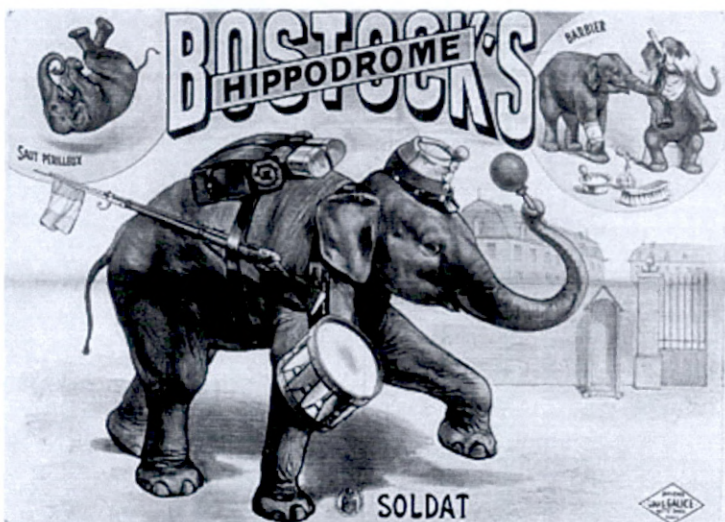
The Bostock-Ferari Midway Carnival Company offered outstanding attractions and did exceptional business. During this time they had two operations on tour, at least one of

which (and probably both) traveled by rail. This consisted of fourteen shows, each requiring a sixty-foot flatcar to transport it. As their advertising material stated at the time these were "not twenty rag fronts that can be packed in a trunk or sugar barrel, but each of the fourteen a costly oil-painted, permanent, hand-carved, gold embellished, mirror inlaid structure." This probably refers to the fact that the company traveled with carved show front wagons (presumably brought from England), Bostock's Gondola ride and Carousel, plus a number of living wagons.

The shows had a 10 cent pay gate and at least one of them provided two free Midway attractions, a balloon ascent by Jack Cassel and Lolta, the high diver.

Bostock gave his Midways a foreign theme, enabling patrons to enjoy a fictional view of places they were never likely to see. Shows on that first tour included the Egyptian Village with a featured dancer named "Little

Poster used by Bostock. Ringling Museum of Art, Tibbals Digital Collection.





Egypt," said to be the same sensational dancer who appeared at the Chicago World's Fair in 1893.

With the Egyptian Village was a German Village with Tyrolean warblers, the "luxurious gay Paree" with can-can dancers, Old Romany Rye (a gypsy camp) and a Chinatown Opium Den.

Cover of the Bostock program at the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo in 1901. Richard J. Reynolds, III collection.

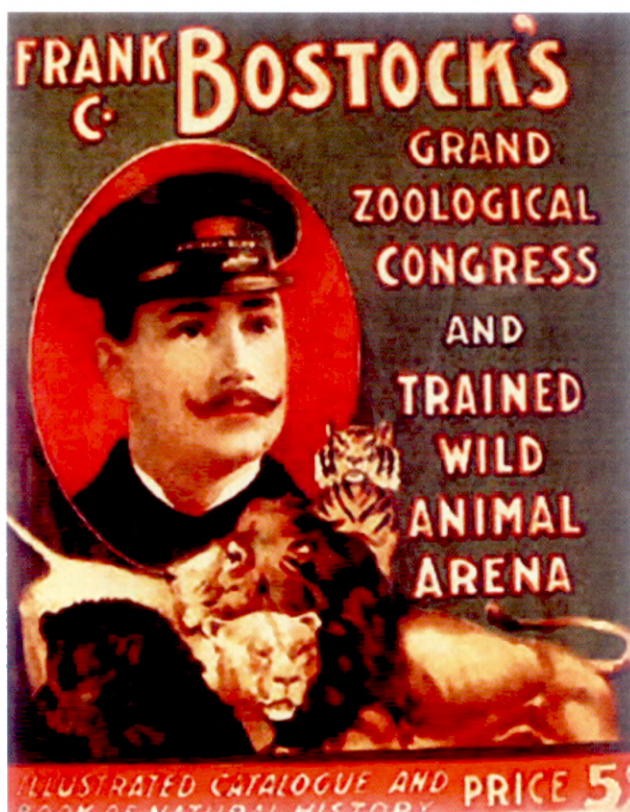
Also offered was a "museum," a fat boy, bearded lady, a wild girl, a sacred white donkey of Siam, a darkness and dawn show (a walk-through consisting of photos with a lecturer detailing the creation of planet earth), Electra the flying illusion, Posco the poison man (a snake charmer), the Crystal Maze and Chiquita the living doll. Chiquita was second in importance only to the animal show and had a tiny carriage that was used as a street bally for the entire show.

Following its opening in Brooklyn the show moved to Allegheny, Pennsylvania; Wilmington, Cleveland and Piqua, Ohio; Lafayette, Indiana; Mattoon and Peoria, Illinois; Nashville and Memphis, Tennessee; and Evansville, Indiana. All dates lasted a week and the final stand of the season was a two-week run at the Alabama State fair in Birmingham. The show wintered in Baltimore, Maryland as an indoor zoo attraction.

In 1900 at least one of the shows opened the season at Fulton Street in Brooklyn with a torchlight parade, according to the April 28, 1900 *Dramatic Mirror*. The animal show was presented in a tent.

The Bostock Mighty Midway Carnival Company played the Elk's Industrial Exposition played three weeks in New York City April 29. The Hagenbeck title was used there.

Dates that followed were Washington D.C.; Richmond, Virginia; Scranton and Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania; and Baltimore, Maryland, where it was reported that the show split into two units with



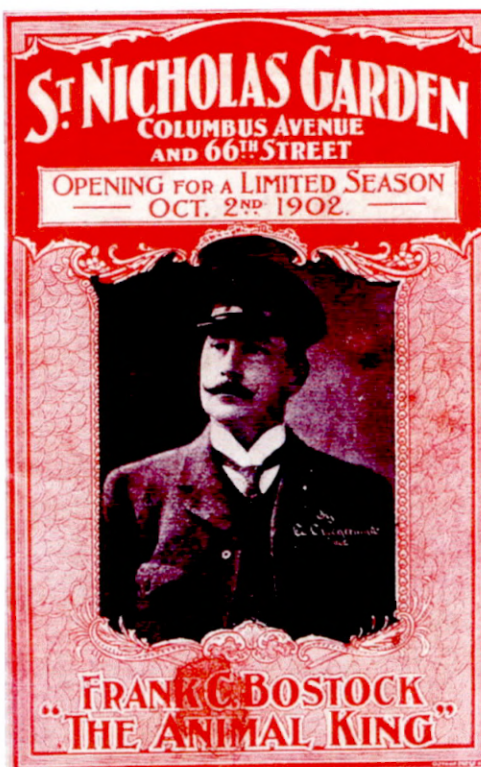
Louis Beck as manager on unit one and Vic Leavitt as manager of unit two.

Opening day attractions were reported as Bostock's Royal Hippodrome, a circus featuring a tight-rope walking elephant, a Cinematograph, the Streets of Cairo, a Moorish Castle, Chief Carlos' Wild West Show, a Turkish Theatre, the streets of India (featuring riding elephants and camels), an African Village, an Ostrich Village where ostrich egg omelets were sold, a Hindu Theatre (where a Professor Levina and Kitty did mind reading), Wombwell's British Menagerie, an Irish Village (featuring singing, dancing and story telling), the Flying Lady Illusion show, ye olde English Gypsy Camp (dances, songs and fortune telling), a German Village (singing, dancing and beer), the Crystal Maze and Bostock's Venetian Gondola and Carousel.

After playing its season finale in Augusta, Georgia the number one unit went to Indianapolis, where a zoo was established. Other zoos operated by Bostock that winter were located in Milwaukee and Baltimore. An arena unit toured the winter vaudeville circuit and another unit operated in Europe.

1901 and 1902 were also busy year for the company. Their run for 1901, for example, took them to Baltimore, Richmond, Louisville, Indianapolis, Milwaukee, Boston, Wilmington, Delaware; Peoria, Illinois; Decatur, Atlanta, and Savannah, Georgia; Bellville, Texas; Jacksonville, Florida; Detroit, and New Orleans.

Advertisement for the Bostock show at St. Nicholas Garden in Manhattan in 1902.



Bostock appeared with his menagerie unit in Indianapolis. On April 13 he was attacked by Rajah, a Bengal tiger, and was dangerously injured. Bostock wore a heavy wire mask and carried a revolver and club.

Preparations were being made to ship Rajah with several other animals to the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo. At the conclusion of the exercise the beast was released and started toward his cage.



The animal suddenly leaped upon Bostock and forced him to the floor. Another trainer rushed to the rescue and drove the enraged beast to his cage after firing several shots into his body. During the winter of 1900-1901 Bostock had menageries in Milwaukee, Baltimore, Indianapolis and Atlantic City. A printed guide was distributed in Milwaukee. The first page listed: Frank C. Bostock, Enterprises; Frank C. Bostock, Carnival Companies, Seven in number and Frank C. Bostock, Trained Wild Animal Arenas. The resident managers were Francis Ferari, Victor D. Levitt and Joseph G. Ferari.

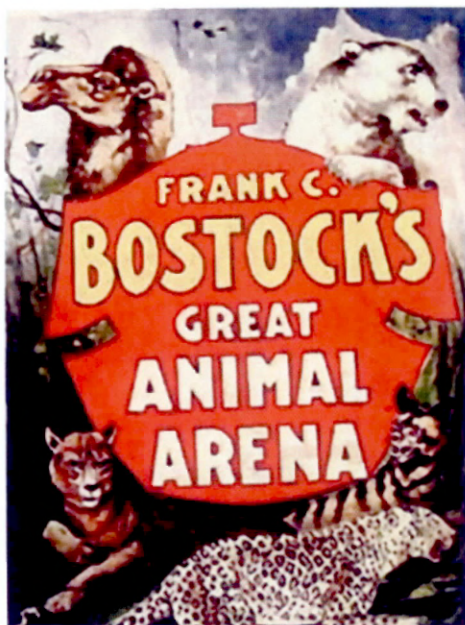
The Milwaukee staff included Mrs. Francis Ferari, treasurer; Capt. Deosta, Superintendent of menagerie; and Antony Oliveto, musical director. The arenic display of wild animals was presented at 2:00, 2:30, 3:00, 3:30 and 4:00 P.M. Sports and pastimes of the Orient included elephant, camel, donkey pony and Irish jaunting cart rides at intervals. Among the arena acts were: Wallace, black maned South African lion; Black Prince, African lion; a troupe of Indian leopards; Coyotes from Arizona; Large Cinnamon bear from Siberia; a Striped Hyena, from Abyssinia; Camels and Dromedaries; Snakes and Reptiles and elephants Roger and Lilly.

In Milwaukee Francis Ferari's "unequalled trained wild animal arena show," consisted of: "Twenty noble lions, fifty wild beasts. Princess Delaware with a group of nine full-grown lions, performing in a 50 foot steel arena. Paul Devere with five treacherous pumas and panthers. Lawrence the lion hunter, Big Frank the only boxing kangaroo. Professor Briggs the animal educator. Paul Kruger and the fierce untamable lion. Fatima II the only Couchee Couchee dancing bear, baby lions, bears, wolves, hyenas, etc."

Side shows consisted of Professor Woodford's dog and monkey circus, Edison's animated pictures, the chameleon lady, the original wild girl and King Dado the snake eater. And there were mobile versions of "traditional" exposition-type attractions like a Ferris wheel, a crystal maze (Hall of Mirrors), the famous streets of Cairo, a trip to the moon, a German village, a Turkish theatre, etc.

Bostock and the Feraris obviously fancied themselves at the top of the outdoor show business, and were not that bothered about goading the opposition. Advertising material for the show boasted: "Real cities wanting real shows get the real thing. And not a shoddy rag-shop imitation."

"Ever since our arrival in this country hayseeds, rubes and rummies have tried to imitate our trained wild animal exhibitions, but have failed at every town; and today we stand without a rival of any description."



Also in 1901 the Bostock-Ferari Midway Carnival Company presented a huge wild animal show, plus other attractions, at the Pan-American Exposition at Buffalo, New York. Bostock himself took charge of this project and stayed in Buffalo for the entire season.

The back cover of the Bostock program at the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo in 1901. Richard J. Reynolds, III collection.

The Bostock animal show at the Pan-American Exposition in 1901 was the pinnacle of his American presentations. The world's fair in Buffalo opened on May 1 and closed on November 2.

The show was given behind an elaborate front entrance. This exterior or was a mass of paintings, carving and gilding and it presented the highest degree of decorators' art. It was without question the handsomest on the midway.

The interior was vast and spotless. Around its sides in their steel-barred cages were the animals.

It was up to that time the most extensive collection of wild animals shown in America.

The performance included a bevy of wild animal trainers.

The official program listed the trainers. It stated that the acts were subject to alteration, meaning that all the trainers would not appear at every performance.

"CAPTAIN BONAVIDA, with his matchless group of twenty-five forest-bred African lions. PRESENTING THE

The front of the Bostock show at the Pan-American Exposition. Bob Goldsack collection.





MOST WONDERFUL EXHIBITION OF ITS KIND IN THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD.

"MADAME M. L. MORELLI, The Queen of Jaguars, WHOSE REMARKABLE EXHIBITION WITH BLOOD-THIRSTY LEOPARDS, PANTHERS AND JAGUARS HAS CAUSED MOST FAVORABLE COMMENT THROUGHOUT EUROPE AND AMERICA. THE EXTRAORDINARY COURAGE DISPLAYED BY THIS LITTLE LADY BEGARS DESCRIPTION. "Elephant Contrast. Big Liz and Little Doctor, THE LARGEST AND SMALLEST ELEPHANTS IN AMERICA, IN THEIR REMARKABLE PERFORMANCE. INTRODUCED BY MR. CHARLES MILLER.

"LA BELLE SELICA, the famous Algerian Dancer and Lion handler, EXHIBITING A TRULY NOVEL PERFORMANCE, DEFYING THE 'KINGS OF THE FOREST,' AND ACTUALLY DANCING IN THEIR MIDST. THESE ANIMALS HAVE BUT RECENTLY BEEN IMPORTED FROM ALGIERS WHERE THEY WERE FORMERLY USED IN ENTERTAINING THE BEY OF THAT COUNTRY.

"THE COMBINIATION GROUP. Educated by Mr. Herman Weadon, COMPRISING A BEAR, SILESIAN BOARHOUND, TWO HIMALAYAN SLOTHS, ONE BLACK CANADIAN BEAR, ONE RUSSIAN BEAR, ONE CADIAC BEAR, TWO STRIPED HYENAS, ONE ROYAL BENGAL TIGER, AND ONE AFRICAN LION. THIS COMBINATION IS IN ITSELF ALONE A REMARKABLE ONE AND THE ACTS ACCOMPLISHED BY THE VARIOUS ANIMALS FALL LITTLE SHORT OF MARVELOUS. "MADAME CLOPE, snake Enchantress, WITH HER CREEPING, CRAWLING, WRIGGLING MASS OF SERPENTS, ALLIGATORS, CROCODILES, IGITANAS,



MME. M. L. MORELLI, SUPERB LEOPARD AND JAGUARS.



MLLE. GAVETTE  
And Her Wonderfully Educated Denizens of the Arctic Circle.

ETC.

"M'LE BAUFORT, the talented Animal Trainer PRESENTING A REMARKABLE EXHIBITION WITH BROWN AND BLACK BEARS, AFRICAN LIONS AND HYBRIDS (CROSSED BETWEEN WOLF AND GREAT DANE).

"MADAME GERTRUDE CHARLOTTE PIANKA, The Lady of lions. THE MOST TALENTED WOMAN IN THE ANIMAL PROFESSION. HER MARVELOUS ACCOMPLISHMENTS WITH LIONS AND LIONESSES BORDER ON THE MIRACULOUS.

"THE ELEPHANT SCHOOL The Baby Elephants, TRAINED AND PRESENTED BY MATTHEW JOHNSON. INTELLIGENCE OF THESE APPARENTLY CLUMSY ANIMALS IS ASTONISHING. THEY ARRIVED IN THIS COUNTRY IN THE MONTH OF APRIL' LAST AND SINCE THAT TIME HAVE BEEN TRAINED TO PERFORM. NO BETTER EXAMPLE OF ELEPHANTINE INTLLIGENCE COULD BE SHOWN THAN THIS.

"SIGNOR ARNOLDO, the Panther King, THE FOREMOST ANIMAL HUNTER AND TRAPPER OF MEXICO AND SOUTH AMERICA. HIS ENCOUNTER WITH PUMAS, COUGARS AND

MOUNTAIN LIONS NUMBER MANY, AND THE FORMOST ANIMAL HUNTER AND TRAPPER OF MEXICO AND SOUTH AMERICA. HE PRESENTS TODAY A VERY STARTLING EXHIBITION OF THESE TREACHEROUS ANIMALS.

"YOUNG WALLACE, Son of Wallace, the terrible Man-

Some of the Bostock animal trainers at the Pan-American Exposition. Pfening Archives.



MADAME D'ORCY D'AVILLY



MADAME ORA CECIL  
American "Queen of Leopards" and One of Her Disobedient Pupils.



Eating Lion, WHO HAD THE RECORD OF DESTROYING SEVEN DIFFERENT TRAINERS. THIS LIKE HIS FATHER IS ABSOLUTELY UNTAMABLE: IN SPITE OF ALL EFFORTS TO SUBJUGATE OR SUBDUE HIM HE IS TODAY AS TREACHEROUS AS EVER. INTRODUCED IN THE BIG ARENA ON SPECIAL OCCASIONS BY DIRECTOR BOSTOCK, 'THE ANIMAL KING.' ANNOUNCEMENTS OF THIS SPECIAL FEATURE WILL BE MADE AT LEAST SEVEN DAYS IN ADVANCE.

"FITZ, the Boxing Kangaroo. A VERY INTERESTING EXHIBITION. THE KANGAROO, ONE OF THE MOST TIMID OF ALL ANIMALS, AFTER THREE YEARS OF PATIENCE AND PERSEVERANCE, HAS BEEN TAUGHT TO STAND ERECT AND ENGAGE IN A THREEROUND FISTIC ENCOUNTER WITH HIS SPARING PARTNER 'KID' HOGAN OF BROOKLYN, N. Y.

"BOBBY MACK, the famous Bostock Clown, AND HIS PERFORMING DOGS, MONKEYS, AND THE LAUGH PROVOKING POSITIVE MULE 'DYNAMITE.' A LUDICROUS EXHIBITION, CAUSING AT ALL TIMES NO END OF LAUGHTER AND AMUSEMENT.

"THE EDUCATED ZEBRAS AND QUAGGAS.

THE FIRST INSTANCE THAT THESE STUBBORN AND EXCEPTIONALLY BEAUTIFUL ANIMALS EVER HAVE BEEN TRAINED TO PERFORM. INTRODUCED BY PROF. P. BARLOW.

"HERR DRESDACK, the Modern 'Hercules,' WITH HIS HIGHLY EDUCATED GROUP OF BROWN, BLACK AND WHITE BEARS. THESE ANIMALS HAVE BEEN TRAINED WITHIN THE LAST THREE MONTHS AND EXHIBIT A MARVELOUS EXAMPLE OF WHAT CAN, BE ACCOMPLISHED IN SO SHORT A TIME. THE WHITE OR POLAR BEAR IS THE ONLY TRAINED SPECIMEN IN THIS COUNTRY.

"CLYDE POWERS, the Original 'Febe,' AND HIS INTERESTING COLLECTION OF GEESE, DUCKS, GOATS AND GAME-CKOCKS. A STRANGELY WEIRD BUT INTERESTING EXHIBITION OF THESE PARTICULAR SPECIMENS OF THE FES- THERED TRIBE."

It was with these big shows, sometimes called "jungles," that Bostock was really to make a name for himself, not to mention huge sums of money. In his book *The English Circus and Fairground*, Sir Garrard Tyrwhitt-Drake says of him: "He specialized in collections of wild animals, including many big performing groups in the big exhibitions in this country, such as the White

City [London], and also in France and America. His 'jungles' were big, expensive shows, but big money takers and housed in a large building. The built-in cages he ranged around three sides, with a big stage arena in the center with which all the cages communicated by a passage running behind each. This enabled him to drive the performing groups of animals straight into the arena from their everyday quarters."



Capt. Jack Bonavita and his large group of lions. Pfening Archives.

Frank C. Bostock, "The Animal King," reported trouble, too. Earlier in the summer, Regal, one of his largest African lions, had died of heat prostration. Now, on the last day of the exposition, Jumbo the elephant, his star attraction, became unmanageable. For several days Jumbo had refused to eat. Then, on the morning of Buffalo Day, he attacked Bostock. That afternoon he knocked his keeper unconscious. Bostock decided to destroy his prized animal. He told the press that he was going to hold a public execution at the stadium on the exposition grounds. Tickets, at fifty cents a person, would be available at the gate. He said: "It is likely that Jumbo will be hanged, or choked to death with chains, in which case other elephants will be used."

Capt. Jack Bonavita. Pfening Archives.



There was immediate opposition to Bostock's plan. The method of execution, they said, was simply not in accord with the ideals of the Pan American Exposition and therefore must not be permitted to occur on the fairground. They had, however, no objection to electrocution.

On Saturday afternoon, November 3, over seven thousand people filled the Pan American stadium to witness the electrocu-



tion of Jumbo. The mammoth elephant was chained to two large wooden blocks in the center of the stadium. Long electric wires connected him to a transformer several hundred yards away. Bostock stood in front of him and made a short speech. He told the crowd about Jumbo's military career. He recalled the long voyage from the kingdoms of Africa to the Niagara Frontier and how hard it had been for Jumbo to adjust to life along the Midway. These events, Bostock said, had completely altered Jumbo's sanity. He had become a killer and death by electrocution was the only solution. With no further delay, Bostock gave a signal and Lewis Mills, the electrician, pulled a lever and eleven thousand volts of electricity were shot into the elephant.

Yet nothing happened. The electricity didn't work and Jumbo was still alive. The crowd, almost spontaneously, started to laugh and Bostock, himself incredulous, promised over the din of the laughter that he would refund the tickets. Only later did he realize that Jumbo's hide had the effect of rubber and was impossible to penetrate. Jumbo's execution was stayed.

When the Buffalo Exposition closed Bostock opened with many of his troupe at the Cyclorama Building at Tremont Street, Boston, where the show was billed as being given by the Bostock Arena Company. This unit stayed the winter in Boston while Francis Ferari toured vaudeville theatres. But 1901 was not all good news as a fire is said to have completely destroyed Bostock's Baltimore Zoo building resulting in the death of many animals and the loss of equipment.

Bostock spent much of the following year at the South Carolina Interstate and West Indian Exposition, at Charleston, West Virginia, with a similar show to the one at Buffalo. The fair opened on December 1, 1901.

It appears Bostock also had interests outside the partnership with the Feraris during this period. At the Indianapolis Fall Carnival in October 1900, a side show presented by Bostock featured trained animals, high-divers, high-wire walkers, dancers, and human curiosities.

Around this time Bostock was apparently so busy with all his wild animal arenas and other interests that he sold Francis Ferari a 50% working share in his shows, carnivals and winter units. Units at this time went under the name of Bostock Trained Wild Animals and Ferari's Trained Wild Animal Show.

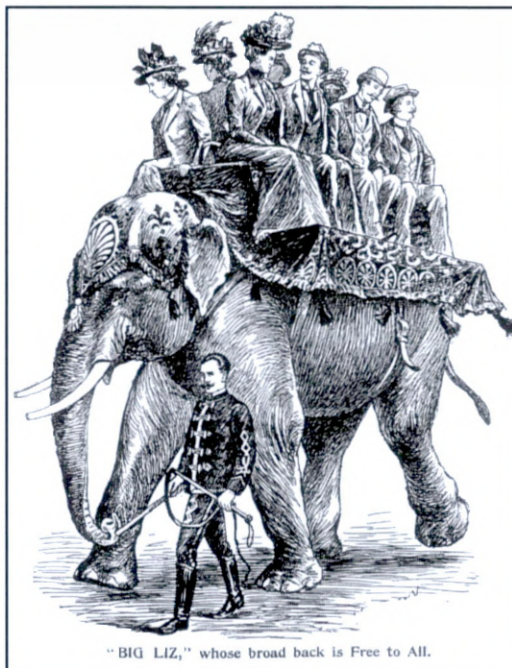
The show played around the country while others stayed at permanent locations such as Bostock's Cyclorama in the winter and nearby Wonderland at Revere Beach in the summer; Manhattan Beach in Cleveland and even at the St. Nicholas arena at 66th Street and Columbus Avenue in New York.

In 1902 one unit spent the winter in Key West, Florida while another played the New England vaudeville circuit in Springfield, North Adams, and Holyoke, Massachusetts; Hartford, Connecticut; Manchester, New Hampshire; Troy and Albany, New York; and Paterson and Trenton, New Jersey. Most of these acts then moved to Dreamland at Coney Island for the summer months.

Also in 1902, Bostock's brother Edward speaks of him in his book *Menageries, Circuses and Theatres* as having toured France.

By 1903 the Bostock-Ferari Midway Carnival Company was no more and the show became Ferari Brothers Great London Carnival Company "successor to the Bostock-Ferari Carnival Company."

A drawing of the elephant ride at the Pan-American Exposition. Richard J. Reynolds III collection.



A collection of Bostock's animals appeared at Sea Beach Palace in Coney Island. According to the June 25, 1903 *New York Times* a significant event took place there the day before when twin elephants were born to Big Liz, the only female elephant owned by Bostock. The twins were born between 4:00 and 4:30 in the stall occupied by Big Liz. The babies were named Shamrock III and Reliance. Reliance died shortly

after birth. Jumbo II was the father. He and Big Liz had met at the Pan-American Exposition twenty-two months before.

The Bostock Midway Menagerie unit was playing Newark, New Jersey on June 2, 1903, when Louise Morelli was mutilated by a jaguar in the trained cage. The cage which was about fifty-feet in diameter and eighteen-feet in height and open on the top.

In 1903 another unit appeared in Atlantic City for the entire summer as other units were playing at Revere Beach and Manhattan Beach in Cleveland.

The unit in Cleveland was titled Bostock's Great Animal Arena. The menagerie opened in Cleveland. A Cleveland newspaper reported that the opening performance in a steel cage took place on May 30. Herman Weedon was the trainer.

One of the featured animals was Orab, the gorilla. This was a fraud as published photos clearly show that Orab was not a gorilla, but a chimpanzee. Bostock had never before called an animal by the wrong name.

Many people thought that Bostock was a fraud. In his book *The Ways of the Circus*, animal trainer George Conklin stated that Bostock was a fraud, and that Bostock was afraid to go near the lion Wallace. There is no evidence that Conklin was right.

Bostock's larger carnivals, meanwhile, carried the following attractions: Beautiful Orient, Temple of Light, a "London Ghost Show," Dolitta the world's smallest moth-



er, statues turned to life, Minnie the wild girl, an Athenian circus, a dog and monkey circus, Bostock's Wild Animal Arena, Royal Lilliputians, a show of mysteries, world's water circus, a German village and glass workers.

Bostock also took his famous animal trainer Jack Bonavita to Europe in 1903 where he became a sensation in both London and Paris, where Bostock bought the Hippodrome building on Blvd de Clincy.

Bostock's first Paris season ended on June 12, 1904 and the show returned to Coney Island for the summer when the Dreamland Amusement Park opened. Its driving force was Samuel Gumpertz, a successful show business promoter from Missouri, who engaged Bostock to provide the wild animal show during the summer months.

The 1905 season again featured Bostock's own trainers and in addition there was Wilhelm Hagenbeck's big group of 14 bears.

The Bostock Arena was a large semi-circular Grecian style building, located to the right of the entrance, between the east and west promenades. Captain Jack Bonavita and his lions were the star attractions, supported by other acts, including Madame Morelli and her leopards, Herman Weedon with his lions, tigers, leopards and hyenas, and Madame Aurora with her polar bears.

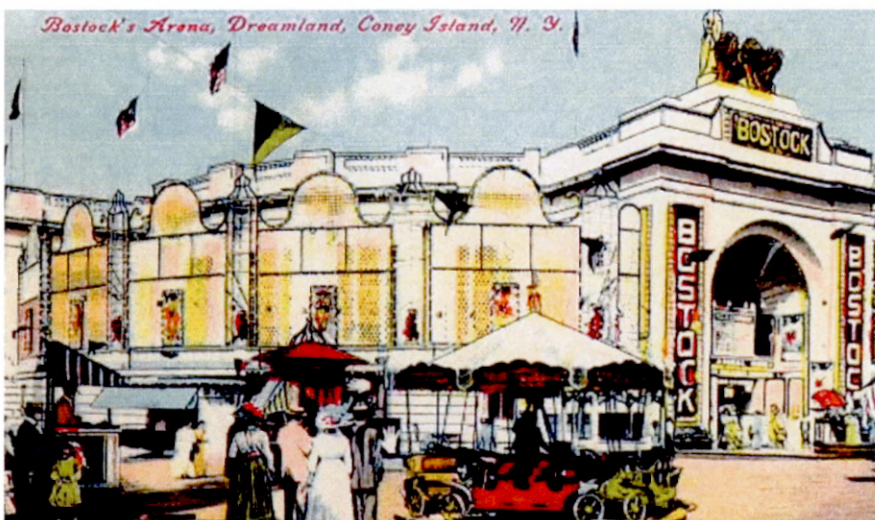
In July Bonavita was mangled by a lion in an arena at Dreamland. He was placed in a Brooklyn Hospital. While there, blood poisoning set in, his right hand clawed. It was a bad accident that required immediate amputation of two of his fingers and eventually his whole right arm below the elbow.

In 1905 Bostock returned to Paris in September. Bostock himself returned to the big cage on October 27 on the occasion of Jack Bonavita's benefit night gala. He presented the black-maned lion Wallace who wounded him quite seriously.

For the next several years Bostock had many ventures, including a large animal show at White City Amusement Park, Cleveland, in 1905 and in order to spend time in Europe he left his winter zoos, vaudeville units, traveling midways and permanent summer attractions in the hands of capable showmen.

Between 1903 and 1907 he had a show running per-

manently at the Paris Hippodrome. This was where Bostock was badly mauled by Wallace the lion and he never appeared in public again.

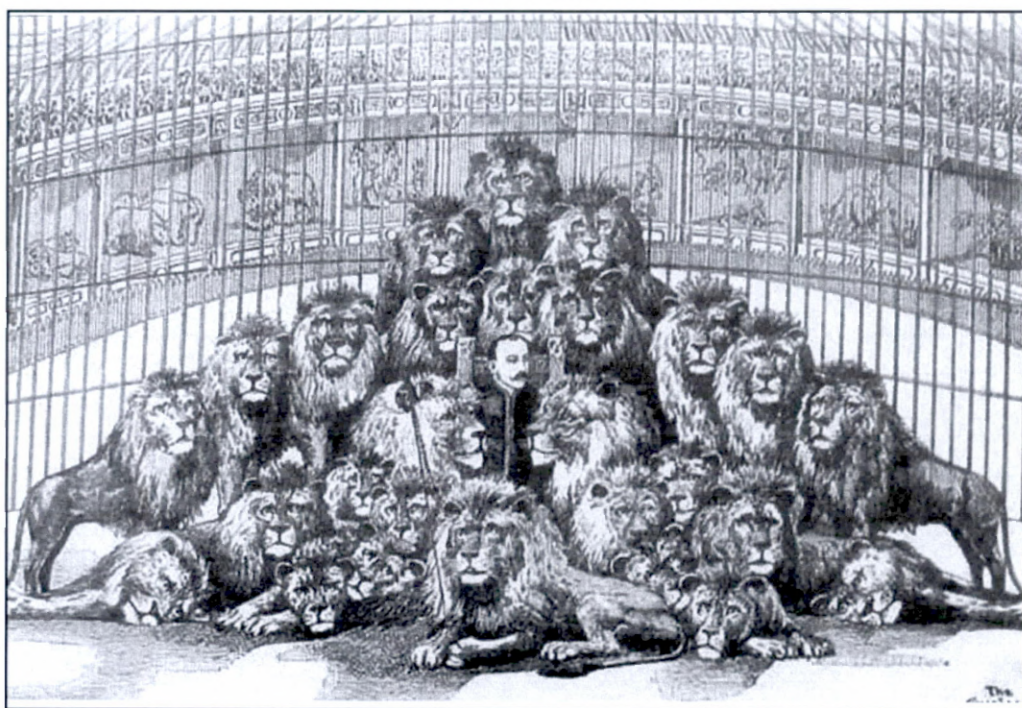


The Bostock show at Coney Island. Pfening Archives.

By 1906 the Ferari brothers had gone their separate ways, never to permanently re-form. Francis Ferari sold all his show property and returned to England in 1909, but was back with another carnival bearing his name in 1911. In a 1912 ad in *Billboard* he pictured himself as a king and heads the ad: "Royal Proclamation from King of All Carnival Kings." He toured until 1914, dying in November of that year.

Joseph Ferari continued to tour until the end of the 1918 season when he retired as a trainer. He sold all his

Frank Bostock and his large lion act. Pfening Archives.





equipment in 1919 and opened a carousel factory on Staten Island. He retired a few years later due to ill health. He died in 1953, aged 85.

References to Bostock after 1907 are difficult to find, although in that year a Bostock Arena opened at Ontario Beach Park, Rochester, New York and Bostock had a wild animal show outside the grounds of an Exposition at Jamestown, Virginia, while the Feraris had a similar show on the Exposition grounds. The 101 Ranch Wild West also appeared at this fair.

In 1908 a Bostock unit appeared at Coney Island's Luna Park and in 1909 at Dreamland. Bostock also booked his Wild Animal Arena at the Brussels International Exposition of 1910. It opened April 23 and closed November 7.

The Bostock Jungle Exhibition was at the Manchester, England 1909 Christmas period. After the Manchester stand, the Jungle moved to the Scottish Zoo building in Glasgow.

Bostock apparently sold the Coney Island show to Bonavita after the 1910 season, but Jack's luck continued on its downward spiral when the whole park was destroyed by fire on the season's opening day in 1911.

"On May 27, 1911 the Hellgate fire occurred. The animal arena was on the eastern side of Dreamland, a couple of hundred yards from Hellgate. By the time the night watchman aroused Ferrari and Bonavita (owner and trainer), and eight keepers out of bed, the wary animals were wide awake and restlessly pacing back and forth in their cages. Ferrari was confident that the fire could be halted on the other side of the lagoon, but in order not to panic the 80 odd wild animals, his plan was to let them out of their cages and into the main arena. With a steady crack of their whips, they kept the lions, pumas, bears, wolves, leopards, hyena and antelopes on a steady parade around the oval. Things were going as planned until the overhead lights flickered and went out. The red flickering glare of the 275 foot tall tower, now aflame, panicked the wild animals. Nonetheless Ferrari and Bonavita, with only the light from eight lanterns, managed to get five leopards and four lions, one of them the pregnant Victoria, into movable cages and dispatch them to a nearby livery stable. Six Shetland ponies were blindfolded and led along as well. However, Little Hip, the beloved elephant, refused to budge from the concrete block where he was chained. He would only obey Captain Andre, his bull man, who unfortunately hadn't returned from a farewell party in Manhattan."

In 1912 Frank Bostock died at age 46. The man who survived being in the arena with the most ferocious animals on earth died in his home in London, England, on October 8, as a result of a stroke. He was a Mason, an Elk, and a member of the Knight of Pythias.

The December 14, 1912 *Billboard* stated, "Bostock had a knack of staging shows. There was something in the

atmosphere, in the general management that conveyed the impression of the jungle, and made the spectator feel himself in another world the moment he passed from the outside air into the arena building. Bostock always kept his animals at high tension. They were active, alert and ready for a fight or frolic as suited their disposition or the conditions confronting them. One could watch these specimens of the jungle for hours without tiring, so varied and continuous were their activities during the time they were on show.



Frank C. Bostock. Pfening Archives.

"Combined with his thorough knowledge of men, this ability enabled him to select his lieutenants and co-workers a class exactly suited to the duties each was expected to perform. . . .

"The last great success which Mr. Bostock created and which he showed in London this year was known as Wild Australia, over 500 persons taking part. This he organized at an expense of over \$200,000. He was also part owner of Luna Park in Paris, and the controlling figure in the Bostock Scenic Railway

Rides which have been established in all of big cities of Europe."

On October 9, 1912 the *New York Times* published Bostock's obituary, "Frank C. Bostock, the well known animal trainer and menagerie proprietor, died yesterday in London. As a proprietor of animal shows at Dreamland he furnished New York with many a thrill. Bostock was an animal trainer of courage. He had more than one narrow escape from death. On April 12, 1901, while exhibiting in Indianapolis, he was attacked by Rajah, a Bengal tiger, and was so badly injured that it was feared he would not recover. In 1905 he was attacked by a lion while exhibiting in Paris and had another close call. Bostock was best known of late years because of his show at Coney Island."

Bostock's wife Emma asked Harry Tudor to take charge of the business and the animals were all sold by 1914. In America the performing animals were bought by David Horsley for Centaur Films of Bayonne New Jersey. Later, this outfit moved to Los Angeles and became the Selig Zoo with Jack Bonavita as head trainer. Bonavita went to Hollywood, California, where he started acting and later became a director.

Bonavita was killed by a polar bear at Selig Zoo in 1917. Most of the non-performing animals, it is said, were sold to the Borough of Brooklyn and formed the nucleus of the Prospect Park Zoo.

References: Dave Page, The Galloper web site; *King Pole; Pictorial History of American Carnival* by Joe McKennon; Circus World Museum and the Ringling Art Museum; Richard J. Reynolds III, Chris Audibert and Bob Goldsack.



# Donald Burns New York City Animal Dealer and Showman

By John Polacsek

A few years ago I had the opportunity to purchase a circus collection, and scattered within it were correspondence, account books, advertisements, lot licenses, receipts, tickets and documents from a number of shows. The original owner of the collection was a dealer in used circus equipment, and I found some pasteboard tickets that would ADMIT ONE to DONALD BURNS. Although I have the Ted Bowman Circus Route Collection at hand, I could find no references to a Donald Burns Circus being on the road.

I did find advertisements in various route books for an animal dealer named Donald Burns, but documentation of the Donald Burns tickets still eluded me. After spending time on the internet, I have been able to piece together a short history of Donald Burns.

The 1880 Federal Census notes that a Daniel (Donald) Burns lived on Division Street in New York (Manhattan), New York City - Greater New York. He was 40 years old being born in Canada about 1840, and listed his occupation as Showman. Daniel (Donald) was married to Johanna who was also born in Canada in 1837 thus listing her at 43 years old in the census. There was one son in the family, James Burns who was listed as 12 years old, being born in August 1868. So I started with a clerical error in the 1880 census, the possibility that Donald may be a "stage name" and little in print on Daniel/Donald Burns.

According to one interview in the *New York Times* "Burns does not say much about himself, but when you can get him to talking his experiences are wide and his knowledge of both birds and animals far-reaching." The article continued stating "From the very earliest days of his life he had liked nature and birds and animals. While other youngsters threw rocks at bird nests Burns was trying to find out about the little feathered families.

"Later in life he was commissioned by a London society to make a collection for it of rare birds. This work carried him to many parts of the globe."

The reporter also noted that "Years ago he was in the bird and animal business in this city, but when, after he had stocked two circuses with animals and both failed, Burns was 'broke' and had to go to work. He then took

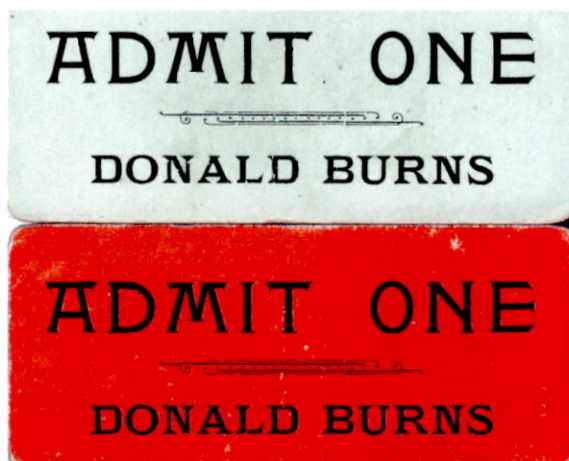
charge of the aviary in Central Park."

The 1875 advertising columns of *New York Clipper* saw multiple ads for D. Burns at 290 Front Street, New York. Donald offered several African dog-faced baboons, monkeys, Australian cockatoos, and snakes to showmen. The animals could be purchased C. O. D., thus Donald Burns was in business as early as 1875.

A newspaper article from 1884 noted that Donald Burns, the veteran dealer in animals at No. 115 Roosevelt

Street, received a consignment by the steamer *Wyoming* that was marked "Silkworms, with care." If the truth of the contents of the boxes "had been known to the lady passengers on that ship, it would have caused great consternation."

Tickets used by Burns menagerie at Bergen Beach. All illustrations are from the author unless otherwise noted.



Nestled inside each of the boxes were two Indian pythons, each 20 feet long, as thick as a man's arm,

and ready to fight at a moment's notice. After the crates arrived at 115 Roosevelt Street the snakes were put in separate boxes, comfortably lined with straw atop a soft bed of wool. The snakes were each fed a rabbit, and the crate was secured by having the lid nailed down tight. Specimens such as these were worth \$75.00, and they were part of a consignment that was soon shipped by railroad to Chicago.

Hungry pythons were always in the news and a number of articles could be traced to No. 115 Roosevelt Street. In one case Burns received one East India python over 20 feet in length and 10 inches thick, and two other African pythons of a similar size. At closing time one of his employees neglected to nail down the lid of the box that held the East India snake, and it soon found its way out of the box.

The next morning the employee found the old black cat in the store pacing back and forth, while the monkeys and some 300 parrots and cockatoos created an unearthly screeching. It was later discovered that the python had escaped, devoured the black cat's kitten, and was coiled up in a empty barrel. Burns noted that the pythons bite hard and "they can draw considerable blood and their



bite smarts. I've been bitten several times and have had two or three tight squeezes, but I grab them around the throat and then I know just how they intend to coil. They can't fool me now any more."

A week later the *New York Times* reporters had another story from No. 115 Roosevelt Street titled: "A MOTHER APE IN MOURNING. Six large, noisy apes, genuine lion slayers, brought half the people in Roosevelt-street outdoors in a crowd yesterday. The biggest of them was as tall as a man, and about as ugly as anything on legs could be. Two of the six are females. One of them gave birth to a baby on the voyage from Sierra Leone, but the big male thrust his strong paw through an opening in the cage and tore the little fellow's head off. The animals were snared by bushmen in Central Africa and brought here in the bark Mausen, Capt. Eared. Donald Burns bought them, and will keep them in Central Park until sold. Three museum agents and an organ grinder made bids for the largest and the smallest of the lot yesterday afternoon. The price fixed on the big fellow, the largest of the species ever brought to New York, is \$800. He ate 50 ears of green corn and an inoffensive parrot before he had been here six hours."

The office of an animal importer can also be considered a magnet when it comes to attracting the agents of various circuses, and a great place to network. Such was the case of Charles Mayer who owed his success as a "wild animal trapper" to Donald Burns.

Mr. Mayer had worked on a number of circuses and had even traveled with one circus to Australia and the Far East. Still he wanted more and "that started me on my career as a collector of wild animals. I use the word collector rather than hunter, because hunting gives the idea" of killing and, in my business, a dead animal is no animal at all. In fact, the mere hunting of the animals was simply the beginning of my work, and the task of capturing them uninjured was far more thrilling than standing at a distance and pulling a trigger. And then, when animals were safely in the net or stockade, came the job of taking them back through the jungle to the port where they could be sold."


Charles Mayer later wrote the book *Trapping Wild Animals in Malay Jungles* documenting his life on the circus and his work collecting animals throughout the world.

"After I left Singapore, I had been thinking constantly of becoming a dealer in animals. The more I considered the idea, the more it appealed to me. I was becoming tired of circus life, especially since my work did not bring me into contact with the animals. On my return to New York I found Gaylord (J. B. Gaylord) and told him about my plans. He encouraged me and introduced me to many men I was glad to know, such as Donald Burns, who was a dealer and had a store in Roosevelt Street.

"At Donald Burns's place I talked my venture over with many showmen.

"They were all interested and wished to encourage me, but they were frankly doubtful of my success because they knew of old Mahommed Ariff's monopoly. (He was the major animal dealer in Singapore.) Burns offered to help me dispose of the animals, but I was not elated at that prospect, for Burns did not attend very strictly to

business. It was a well-known story in the circus world that he had neglected the opportunity of handling the first hippopotamus brought to this country. A sea captain had offered to sell it to him for \$3,000, but Burns refused to take it, he simply wasn't interested. A few days later it was sold to Barnum for \$10,000. [The first genuine hippopotamus ever seen in America was on exhibit at P. T. Barnum's New York Museum in August 1861. At that time Donald Burns would have been 21 years old and \$3,000 was a major investment to consider.]



**SNAKES.**  
**SNAKES.**  
**SNAKES.**

**A New Invoice of African Pythons, S. A. Boas and a large assortment of Dog Face Mandrill, Monster Pig Tail and other Cage Monkeys always on hand.**

**DONALD BURNS,**  
115 Roosevelt Street, N. Y.

Ad from the *New York Clipper*.

"Strangely enough, it was Burns's easygoing way of managing his affairs that gave me my opportunity of going to Singapore. I had been in New York, making my plans and saving my money, but I didn't feel that I had enough to start out on the venture. One day I was in Burns's store when he was away, and a sailor came in, hiding two monkeys under his coat. He had smuggled them into the country and wanted to sell them. The monkeys were black with coal-dust, but one of them, I noticed, had pink eyes. That fact interested me and I bargained for them, buying the pair for fifteen dollars. When the sailor left, I found a cake of soap and gave them a bath. The monkey with the pink eyes turned out to be pure white. Those were the days when Jim Corbett (the fighter) was a great favorite, and he had recently become known as 'Pompadour Jim.' My white monkey had a perfect pompadour on his head.

"Soon one of the newspapers printed a story connecting Corbett and the monkey. A few days later I sold the monkey for \$1,500, and I then had enough money to start for Singapore.

"It was in April, 1887, that I left New York on the steamer Glenderrie. I outfitted in London while we lay over there, taking cargo aboard, and, because I was none to sure what material I should need, I confined my outfit to clothes and guns. On the advice of several animal-men, I bought a Winchester 50-110 express rifle that fired explosive bullets....My revolvers were a Colt .45 and a Smith and Wesson .38. The passage took seven weeks and during that time I became well acquainted with Captain Angus, who commanded the boat. When I reached Singapore, I began at once to learn the Malay language, which is spoken with some variations of dialect throughout the Archipelago."



The *New York Clipper* in 1888 carried ads for Burns noting--Snakes For Sale Snakes of all kinds, also Monkeys and Animals at 115 Roosevelt Street, New York. The only change noted in the ads was that Donald Burns was now an agent, possibly because of his connections to Charles Mayer, and other wild animal exporters.

By 1888 his 20 years old son James was in the business. In one case he purchased a copperhead snake from a longshoreman, who found it on a pier. The reptile was placed in a cheese box in Burns's store, and James amused his friends by showing it off.

One day while showing off the snake, it fastened its fangs in the end of James's finger. The snake was quickly placed back in the box and James ran to the nearest saloon where he swallowed a large quantity of whisky. From the saloon he went directly to a hospital where a surgeon slit the end of his finger, and James immediately fainted. He was told to come back in a short time to have the finger bled again, but instead he made other plans.

James continued to indulge freely in whisky during the afternoon, and he then hunted up his friend, Prof. Nelson, a mesmerist. The Professor promised to go with him to the hospital in the evening and mesmerize him so that the operation might be performed. The Professor failed to appear at the appointed hour, Burns refused the operation, and then went away to drink more whisky. James did recover from the bite, a wiser fellow.

In March of 1892 the circus column in the *New York Clipper* noted that "DONALD BURNS, the well known animal dealer, has supplied over one hundred monkeys for the Barnum-Bailey Show. Burns's classified ad in the *Clipper* noted SNAKES. SNAKES. SNAKES. A new invoice of African Pythons, South American Boas, and a large assortment of Dog Face Mandrill, Monster Pig Tail and other Cage Monkeys always on hand."

When the National Line steamer *America* arrived in New York from London in June of 1892, this floating ark held a first class menagerie. A number of the animals were consigned to Burns. The vessel's cargo of animals consisted of a "tailless ape, which will soon be the chief pride of some menagerie. Two of the apes were shipped from London, but one died on the voyage. It was considered the best educated ape that ever lived. Besides these there were several leopards, red deer, kangaroos, boa constrictors, and a double humped camel."

In July 1892 Burns was again interviewed by a reporter who was curious about what he did with all the reptiles he purchased."


He replied: "Snakes are not long lived at the best, and generally their lives do not extend over six months. They are in demand for museums, circuses and menageries, so you see there is a constant demand for these reptiles and the market requires constant restocking. There is always a market for snakes.

**IMPORTANT**

... TO ...

**SHOWMEN AND ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS.**

... A LARGE CONSIGNMENT OF ...



**Rare Animals, Birds and Reptiles**

... CONSISTING OF ...

*Elephants, Tigers, Black and Spotted Leopards, Alpacas, Tapirs, Ant Bears, Civet Cats, Tiger Cats, Cassowaries, Cockatoos and all kinds of Monkeys, from the Giant Orang-Outang to the Pocket Monkey. I am also the N. Y. agent for DeSilva & Co. of Singapore, and can fill orders for all kinds of animals on short notice. Always on hand Pythons, Boas and Anacondas of all sizes.*

**DONALD BURNS, 115 ROOSEVELT ST., NEW YORK.**

Burns ad in the 1893 and 1894 Barnum & Bailey route books.

"The ugly brutes come in large crates, and the sangfroid with which the mate of the vessel will take off his cap and, wrapping it around his hand, grab a fifteen foot snake by the neck is enough to give an ordinary individual an attack of the blues. They are generally too torpid in this climate to exert themselves much, but once in a while one makes its escape into the hold of a ship, and scares the hardy longshoremen nearly to death...no one wants to tackle a cold, slimy, muscular constrictor in the dark hold of a ship."

Burns was always trying to improve the offerings in his store. In April 1893, the steamship *Gregory* came to the Port of New York from Barbados with a small menagerie on board. The animals included a dozen snakes, one about 14 feet long, about thirty parrots, a dozen or so monkeys, four marmosets, three armadillos, and a couple of copaharas. The vessel had sailed with a much larger number of parrots and bluebirds, but one of the monkeys broke loose, and ate several birds before it could be captured. The whole crew chased the monkey and it was finally recaptured after being hit by a lump of coal. The vessel was placed in quarantine away from the docks and went to anchor. Burns then chartered a small craft that took him out to the steamer where he climbed up the side of the *Gregory* and bought the entire stock of birds, beasts and reptiles before anyone else.

The 1893 Barnum & Bailey Route Book carried Donald Burns's full page advertisement which read: "IMPOR-TANT TO SHOWMEN AND ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS." He had available a large consignment of Rare Animals, Birds, and Reptiles consisting of Elephants, Tigers, Black & Spotted Leopards, Alpacas, Tapirs, and all kinds of monkeys from the Giant Orang-Outang to the Pocket Monkey. The advertisement also noted that he was the New York agent of DeSilva & Company of Singapore, and he could fill orders for all kinds of animals.

Burns was wheeling and dealing with a number of animal dealers, and on one occasion he was taken to court. Burns was making a trade with Otto Eising, an animal dealer in Germany, who in 1893 sent a consignment of



animals from Africa and India to New York. Eising sent one male lion \$800; one female royal tiger, \$1,000; three young lions, \$800; one pair of brown bears, \$100; one Isobel bear, \$125; one Indian goat, \$80; one eagle, \$10; total \$3,015.

According to the *Brooklyn Eagle*, Mr. Eising never received payment, but received some American animals in exchange, and a lawsuit over the outstanding invoice was at hand.

Burns part of the exchange noted expenses in addition to the animals in the deal. He sent one cat, \$20; one Ruessel bear, \$10; flamingo, \$6; one araea, \$10; board and lodging of the son of Otto Eising, \$45; passage to Germany, \$75; cost, \$10; cost, \$10. Burns was then sued for the unpaid balance of the account in the amount of \$2,259. The *Eagle* noted that Burns reportedly sent a letter to the plaintiff that last year was a bad one for his business.

Within a week Burns's attorney wrote the *Brooklyn Eagle* stating that MR. BURNS ALWAYS PAYS HIS DEBTS. It seems that the "article is so worded that it would like the reader to conclude that Mr. Burns owes for the animals, and has excused his failure to pay therefore on the ground that business was bad." It seems that there was a receipt and the payment from Burns was duly signed in the presence of witnesses. The real problem was between Mr. Otto Eising and his son Otto Eising Jr. to whom payment was made by Burns.

In the summer of 1895 there was the report of a sea serpent in the waters off Coney Island. What had floated ashore was the remains of a twenty-three foot long python that had

come from the vessel *Macduff*. The captain of the vessel made a mistake in keeping a red hot stove on the forward deck, and apparently the python had coiled itself around the stove. As a result the reptile burned its skin off in large patches, and soon died. The snake was then dropped over the side of the vessel, and a sea serpent was soon sighted coming ashore on Long Island Sound.

Burns knew all about the *Macduff's* cargo and the unusual "sea serpent" for it seems that the vessel's cargo had been consigned to him.

"That is a good joke," he said, "I have just received a cargo of animals from India for Ringler (Ringling) Brothers' circus. This consignment included six monster pythons and seven medium pythons.

"Mr. George Arstingstall came over with the animals, and it was he who threw the snake overboard. The steamship *Macduff*, from Singapore, came up the bay and anchored near Liberty Island Saturday night. She had

met heavy weather, and the whole cargo of animals was in bad shape, but the snakes had suffered most. Of thirteen pythons, only six survived the voyage.

"One of the monster pythons, over twenty feet long, died Sunday morning.

"When a snake like that dies it is usually skinned, but this one was not because the skin had been injured, and Arstingstall threw the dead python overboard.

"Another python, about eighteen feet long, died Monday night, but was skinned and then thrown overboard, so now they will probably next find a sea serpent that has shed his skin. There is nothing in that sea serpent story. I've got an exact description of the snake found, and I know it is the one thrown overboard from the *Macduff* Sunday."

Burns explained the presence of the rope around the dead python's neck, by saying: "These monster pythons can swallow a sheep or antelope with ease, and we always put a rope around the neck, so that if the snake should break out it could not make away with any of the other animals on board the ship. Most likely Arstingstall did not take the rope off the one thrown overboard."

"Mr. Arstingstall corroborated Mr. Burns. He said there was a rope around the python's neck when it was tossed overboard."

George Arstingstall, master elephant trainer. Buckles Blog.

George Arstingstall was a well known in the circus business and in addition to being one of the top elephant trainers and performers he spoke six languages. Over the years he worked for Howes' Great London, Cooper, Bailey & Company, & Barnum's Great London. In 1887 he retired,

then sailed to Germany to train elephants for Hagenbeck, and returned to America in 1892. He joined the Adam Forepaugh Show, then retired again in 1894, and became an importer of wild animals for DeSilva & Gaylord of Singapore in 1895. Both Arstingstall and Burns were agents for DeSilva, and sorted out the truth of the sea serpent story.

The sea serpent story did not die easily, for the next week a reporter interviewed Donald Burns surrounded by boxes of great snakes in his store on Roosevelt Street.

"The snake season is about over. There will be very few more importations of the clammy and unpleasant emigrants to this country this year.

"It was for this information that the *New York Times* reporter called on Donald Burns, the man who has recently figured in newspaper history as the would-have-been possessor of the supposititious and skinless sea serpent, which created such a sensation the other day.





"Burns is a Canadian by birth, and was a hunter and trapper as long ago as he can remember, and incidentally a collector of snakes. In those early days of the business it was necessary to go far and personally superintend, and take part in the trapping, snaring, or otherwise securing the unpleasant prey....

"They don't live very long in this climate and it is seldom that one will live more than a year. Our native snakes will freeze and come to life all right after it, but cold weather kills the snakes from hot countries. It is probable that from 700 to 1,000 great snakes from India, South America, and Africa are brought to this country every year. They are needed for circuses, museums, and zoological gardens."

In 1896 Percy Williams and Thomas Adams, Jr., the proprietors of Bergen Beach on Jamaica Bay, opened a resort and amusement park that was accessible by the Flatbush Avenue streetcar. The proprietors were determined to provide new attractions at their amusement park almost every week. In early July they introduced Mustang Charlie's Wildest West Show, Dark America, and a production of "Pinafore" staged on the water. The Palace of Illusion was opened at the beach, and people appeared and disappeared in full view of the audience.

During the second week of July Burns's Aggregation of Wild Animals and Athletic Carnival opened. Burns's show provided one of the very best of the kind as animals from every part of the globe could be viewed. In addition there were contests between trained athletes as Burns was also a wrestler. Duncan C. Ross, the all around champion of the world, was in charge of the entertainment and participated in the broadsword combat on horseback.

The Burns Show was accented by Professor Williams Dog and Pony Circus the following week. The Professor's four footed friends did all manner of tricks and participated in the performance with much zest, interest, and ability. By the end of July it was reported that "Donald Burns menagerie and gladiatorial contests are now in full swing at Bergen Beach on the shore of Jamaica Bay." So this answers my question as to when and where the tickets marked ADMIT ONE--DONALD BURNS were used.

Just how long and to what extent the Burns Menagerie was on exhibit is unknown. This annex was possibly opened due to a downturn in the animal importing business. It is known that in July of 1900 Donald Burns, "the proprietor of a store where animals were sold on Water Street, Manhattan" was hurt in an accident. He was delivering a tapir for exhibition purposes at Bergen Beach on the night of July 6 when there was a collision between a streetcar and a wagon.

It was a dark night and the wagon was driving on the tracks when it was rear ended by a street car causing Burns to be thrown against a telegraph or trolley pole.

His right shoulder was injured, hurting his business pursuits. In the law suit that followed it became apparent that Burns had been a noted wrestler, which explains the athletic contests that were highlighted in addition to his menagerie at Bergen Beach. He was also suing for damages as his injuries would no longer allow him the great strength that he needed in his business when he climbed up the sides of steamers to get animals.

The box containing the tapir was smashed and the animal

**Refreshments Served at All Times.**  
**WEEK COMMENCING JULY 20,**

(THE ORIGINAL)

**WILLIS P. SWEATNAM,**

Burns, Nina and Perry, Connolly and Moya, Block  
son and Page, Clivette, Kelly and Grey, Rita Du  
rand, Vanetin Sisters and others.

**17 THE QUEEN OF SEASIDE RESORTS 23**

## **BERGEN BEACH**

You can spend a whole day about Bergen Beach  
A dozen big shows; one hour to each.

**Donald Burns' Menagerie &**  
**Gladiatorial Contests.**  
**Irish Village. Dog and Pony Circus.**  
**"Pinafore" on the Water.**  
**Casino (Vaudeville).**  
**Big Wheel. Moorish Maze.**  
**Egyptian Encampment.**  
**Automaton Theater. Vitascope.**  
**Dark America. Palace of Illusions.**  
**Long Board Walk, Free Concerts, &c.**

Burns ad for Bergen Beach from the *Brooklyn Eagle*.

mal was found running about in a potato field. Then there was the trouble in catching the tapir and the loss of the conveyance that was smashed by the trolley car. The verdict was \$7,500 in favor of Burns. The story did not end there as the owner of the horses, harness and wagon that was smashed, settled out of court with Mr. Burns.

Donald Burns decided to change his occupation after the injury. It could also have been the fact that in November 1901 a heavy wind and high tide came ashore at Bergen Beach and wrecked a considerable portion of the amusement park. Late in 1906 a story in the *New York Times* noted was now the keeper of the Bird House in Central Park. The story centered on a snake tooth in his thumb, but it showed Burns was no longer wrestling large snakes.


"Burns then recalled that away back in the eighties, when he ran the only large animal store in New York, he had been bitten by a boa constrictor, but he was sure he had been bitten on the left thumb. He remembered reaching in a crate of snakes to pull one for a patron, and reaching in his left arm. Moreover, he showed the scar on his left thumb yesterday. In jerking back his arm from the snake crate he had broken one of the fangs of the reptile, and the wound on his thumb healed over the bit of ivory."

From there on Donald Burns became known as the keeper of the birdhouse in New York's Central Park. Occasional stories about trapping migrating finches, doctoring a sick parrot, and taking care of a French-speaking parrot that were part of his new occupation. Still, he lived an exciting life as an importer of exotic animals and a showman.

Sources: *Brooklyn Eagle*, *New York Times*, *New York Clipper*, *Trapping Wild Animals in Malay Jungles* by Charles Mayer and various circus route books.




# Bill Kasiska's Letterheads



**TOL BROS. SPANISH-AMERICAN**  
**CIRCUS**  
 COMBINED WITH  
**OKLAHOMA NELL'S DANCING GIRLS**

**Original**  
**New**  
**Novel**  
**Different**



**Two**  
**Complete**  
**Shows for**  
**One Ad'm.**

PERMANENT ADDRESS  
 215 WEST RENO, OKLAHOMA CITY, OKLA.  
 December 20, 1934

**Ponies**  
**Dogs**  
**Clowns**  
**Ariel Acts**  
**Ground Acts**  
**Concert Band**  
**and**  
**Beautiful**  
**Dancing Girls**

MR. Terrell M. Jacobs,  
 Hotel Cecil,  
 7th and Main Street,  
 Los Angeles, Calif.

Dear Sir:-

Your letter of the 18th received  
 and contents noted.

Reference to the description of the  
 circus property we have for sale beg to advise that  
 it consists of the following.

One female elephant weight about four ton.  
 our price on which is \$1500.00  
 One 1934 Model Chevrolet truck, short wheel base  
 with Kingham trailer with body built to haul  
 elephant and six ponies. This truck was purchased  
 new in August of this year. Price \$1100.00.  
 Six sorrel spot ponies about 40 inches high weigh  
 about 275 lbs. each. all two years old, out of the  
 same herd and broke to do military drill. new leather

**Gigantic Free Act at Circus Grounds 2 P. M. and 7 P. M. Daily**

Tol Tetter was the owner of this obscure one year wonder that had one of the most peculiar titles in American circus history.



# Good and Bad Circus Towns

Unsurprisingly, some nineteenth century newspapers covered the field show business better than others. The Sun of New York City probably ran more feature articles on circuses than any other paper in America during the 1880s and 1890s. Many pieces originating in *The Sun* were picked up by other papers, alerting researchers that the paper was a rich, unmined vein of information.

Until recently, *The Sun* was not easily accessible. An investigator either had to locate the paper in the original or on microfilm, or hope that an inter-library loan could be arranged. In either case, the laborious task of going through the paper page by page, and column by column lay ahead.

No longer. The Library of Congress's ambitious *Chronicling America* project, begun in 2007, has posted over 900,000 newspaper pages on its website. While the overwhelming majority date from 1900 to 1910, a few from the nineteenth century are available, including *The Sun* from 1880 to 1891, excepting 1888.

This is wonderful news for field show historians. While the circus history fraternity was aware of a few articles from *The Sun*, this happy development breaks open the door of an important source of data. The paper has in depth reporting on subjects such as the birth of a baby elephant, lengthy obituaries of noted personages such as Lewis B. Lent, and numerous interviews with the industry's movers and shakers from P. T. Barnum to Stewart Craven. The site's key word search feature makes finding material incredibly efficient and simple.

The *Sun* published the following interview with William C. Coup, whose circus was making a rare late-summer appearance at Madison Square Garden, in its 23 September 1881 edition. It is reprinted here to convey an idea of the treasures the paper contains. Fred D. Pfening III

"There are good circus towns and bad circus towns," said the veteran manager, W. C. Coup, the other day, while reflectively surveying the throng at the Madison Square Garden. "Some towns are good for one show and bad for another. There is Ann Arbor, Mich. I went there with a show once, not my own, and never wanted to go again. Even in Indiana, my native State, about the only places that are good are Indianapolis and Evansville. I mean for a big show. When your expenses are \$3000 a day you cannot afford to go to a place that can't furnish a

big crowd. We lay out our work for months ahead; but if we find that calamity has struck a place or we get there in harvest time, or business is poor, it is not an uncommon thing to skip it, although we may have spent thousands of dollars in various kinds of advertising. I do not consider Paterson, N. J., a good circus town for a big show. The day it was said the whole city turned out, I know that the show took in only \$1500. I found a pretty rough crowd there once in 1870 (sic), which took possession of the ring, grabbed at the horses' tails and stopped the performance."

"But you circus folks are credited with being able to take care of yourselves in a row."

"Now don't you make the mistake of supposing that show people are rough. We find it to our interest to behave ourselves, and to leave a good reputation behind us. I don't believe you will find any 500 persons better behaved and disciplined than our crowd. We put it in our licenses now that we are to have full police protection."

William Cameron Coup. Pfening Archives.

"Are you ever troubled by roughs?"

"Sometimes. Of course the town is not responsible for that. Recently at a Pennsylvania town we were robbed of half our dressing room.

At Detroit we had trouble with roughs, and they stole my buggy out of a field. Yet Detroit is not a bad town. Formerly shows tried to do their own police work. I have found out that that is a mistake. We always let in the police and their wives free, and we find it pays. There are little tricks to look out for in different towns. At Fort Wayne there is a banker who owns some land near the circus ground, and if a stake or a tent pole happens to get into his lot he will clap an attachment for damages on you. Then we must be careful not to make disparaging remarks about places we visit, for sometimes such talk will be resented by an entire population. We find it pays to get the respectable class to patronize a show. We send tickets to the ministers, and often they come. Recently in Lockport [New York] I had a minister return his five tickets, saying that he could not conscientiously attend because he had heard some of our folks using bad language. I wrote him that if I found that my show was demoralizing I would burn it. Afterward he





wrote me a very nice apology, saying he had heard the people speak highly of the conduct of our men. You see, a show's reputation is part of its capital, and advertises it for the next year.

"Nashua, N. H., is a bad circus town. They can't raise money enough to pay for a big show. You see, we pay as much for a good band now as was formerly paid for an entire company. We have our stars, just like the theatres, and when they are billed for some towns they are sure to draw. Cincinnati is said to be a bad circus town, but the biggest sum I ever saw taken in for one performance, which was \$11,070, was in Cincinnati. An accident may make a place good at one time and bad at another. I have no doubt that the heated term in New York cost me \$30,000.

"There is evolution in circus as well as in everything else. My dressing room now is twenty-five feet longer than the circus tent was three years ago.

"If we strike a town just about the time the crops are harvested the people are pretty sure to come in crowds. At Atlanta the people will come 150 miles to see us. We are billed there two months ahead. But recently I got caught in Ohio during harvest, and lost money every day for two weeks. When your expenses are \$3000 a day you cannot afford to wait long for customers. We generally calculate on getting about all the money that can possibly be got out of a town at the first rush.

"New England is generally the best show country. The population is dense, and means of locomotion are abundant. That is what brings crowds to a show. Kansas City is a good show place. So is Springfield, Mo. So is middle Arkansas where we get folks from a wide circuit when they know it is a first class show.

"The shows that are made up principally of advertising don't pay the second time. It costs us \$40,000 a year for printing alone, but we find it pays. Milwaukee is good for the first show that comes along for the season, but bad for the second. Chicago is a good show town. So is Boston, and one reason that Boston is liked by us is that we do not have to pay any license there. We formerly paid no license in Brooklyn, but they demand the fee now. The variation in expense of running the same show is sometimes as much as \$1000 a day. Sometimes rainy weather or an unlucky day will prevent our taking in enough money to pay for advertising. The Mayor of an Indiana town told me he supposed I must have taken at least \$10,000 out of the place, but I showed him our books, where it appeared we had only taken in \$2000.

"Brooklyn is a pretty fair circus town, but now that the Capitoline Ground is broken up, the best location is gone. Jersey City is not a good circus town, and is a fearfully expensive place for various reasons. The last time I showed

# W.C.COUP'S NEW UNITED MONSTER SHOWS. THREE CIRCUSES IN ONE GREAT RING. COMBINED WITH



## THE GREAT WORLD'S FAIR. EXCURSION TRAINS ON ALL RAIL-ROADS TO THESE GREAT SHOWS.

In 1882 the Coup show featured leaping by both humans and canines. Cincinnati Art Museum..

there somebody stole my harness. New York State is generally good circus ground, and pays the best of any for an equal amount of advertising. Some towns are good at one time and bad at another for the same show. We find in Europe, and especially in Germany, that it is not of so much consequence to advertise as it is to have a good show. The way to make a show pay is to get the people enthused, as they have been over Lulu and the white horse Nettie and the chariot races. But there are bad circus towns that old circus men always avoid."

Coup usually featured displays of fish on his circus as illustrated in this 1882 poster. Cincinnati Art Museum.

# W.G.COUP'S NEW UNITED MONSTER SHOWS. THREE CIRCUSES IN ONE GREAT RING. COMBINED WITH



## THE GREAT WORLD'S FAIR. EXCURSION TRAINS ON ALL RAIL-ROADS TO THESE GREAT SHOWS.



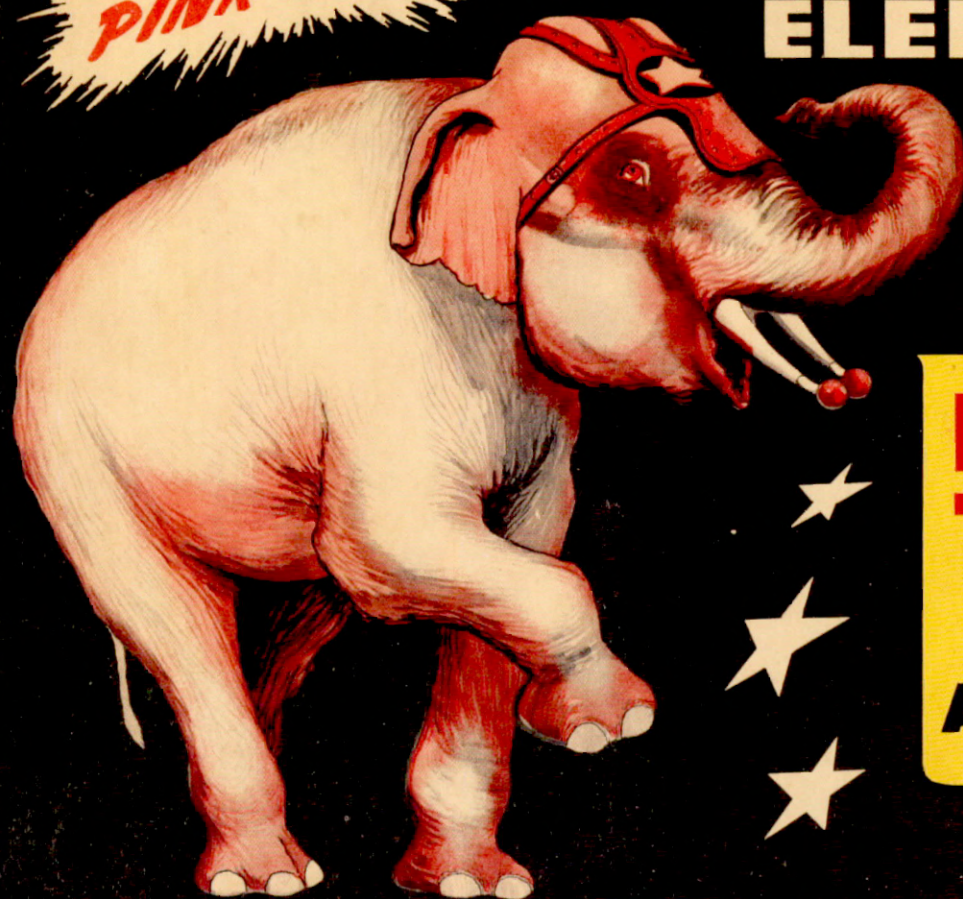
IMPORTED BY

BAILEY Bros.  
CRISTIANI

# CIRCUS ZUMBO

PINK EYES  
PINK EARS

## WHITE ELEPHANT



**FIRST  
TIME  
IN  
AMERICA**

The Most Sacred Animal Ever  
Imported To This Country . .

# ***ALIVE!***